AUSTRALIAN

NetGuide

MP3

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COLLECTORS' PARADISE

Classifieds, collector sites & Web auctions

PDAs

Computers in your pocket

GOOD ADVICE

Designing your Web site

FINDING PEOPLE

Email directories

TOP 50 WEBSITES

PLUS! **SHAREWARE LIVE DIARY NET NEWS**

www.netguide.au.com

We'll be back in October...

We're going back to the good old days and checking out the sites and sounds of retro gaming tributes on the Web. Turn your PC into a space invaders parlour. We also give you some tips for last minute Year 2000 bug fixes, check out the hottest digital cameras on the market and teach you how to register your domain on the Internet. Plus, the site series looks into where and how to host your Web site.

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NetGuide

AUSTRALIAN

FROM THE EDITOR

LISTENING TO THE SALUBRIOUS sounds of James Morrison on trumpet and the classic jazz voice of Emma Pask pushing out a heart felt rendition of 'Stompin at the Savoy' is a luxurious experience. But the moment can be heightened further in the knowledge you've sampled their work for the price it costs to connect to the Internet. Many artists are now promoting their wares through cyberspace using MP3, the file compression standard that let's us download music fast and free. This month's cover feature examines how MP3 works and the best hubs and tools to find songs from both known and unknown artists.

Personal digital assistants or PDAs are another subject making sweet sounds in this issue. We test six of the latest gadgets for keeping you organised and connected while you're mobile.

Also, Nigel Horrocks discovers an increasing number of collectors are using the Net as the medium to grow their stockpile of treasures. Many are using auction sites as places to trade for the items they are looking for, while some have dedicated Web sites to the cause. People seem to be collecting everything from travel sickness bags to used lottery tickets.

And continuing on in her series on creating Web sites, Louise Richardson gathers advice from Web designers, while Bill Bennett instructs us on how we can find someone's email address online in our tutorial feature.

Finally, Top 50 keeps the hottest sites roaring through your connection, this issue covering everything from recycling to weddings.

Till next time,

Daniel Fallon
EDITOR

Congratulations to Stephen Gray, Yarra Chan, Robin Norris, Ian Law and Brian Kenneth Waugh who are the winners of our BigPond Year's Access competition run in the May issue.

Mailbox

Spanish invasion

Dear *NetGuide*,

Para Checo y Heidy, Soy Martha de Chile pero en Texas. Quiero saber de uds. Y de Shirley. Chao / **Martha**

The things people send us. Translation for Checo and Heidy: 'I am Martha of Chile but in Texas. I want to know of you and Shirley.' Err...not here love. /Ed

Lost links

Dear *NetGuide*,

I buy *NetGuide* regularly, but when I was reading through the Jan/Feb issue I had trouble finding a site in the Top50. It was for the Credit Reference Association of Australia. You say the URL is **www.craa .com.au**, but when I tried to load the site I can't get it up. Could you please clarify this for me? You have a picture of the site in the maga-

zine, so it must be there somewhere. / **Bryan Daley**

It appears Credit Reference changed their URL and dumped their old one, without telling anyone or setting up a redirect service. The new URL is www.credref .com.au. /Ed

Dear *NetGuide*,

We are having trouble accessing the site for the interactive model railroad listed in the Timewasters article in the July issue of *NetGuide*. Can you please advise to how to fix our problem. / **John Moehead**

I checked the URL and it was working okay. If you have trouble getting to sites by typing them into the location browser, try going to the *NetGuide* back issues section (www.netguide.au.com/pulp/)

where we have all the Top50 links, and some from articles, listed. Some tips if you do get a "not found" message: check you've typed the correct URL. Some have "www", some don't, some have ".htm", some ".htm" or even "shtml".

For long URLs like www.netguide .au.com/pulp/index.html, try dropping the filename and enter www.netguide .au.com/pulp/. This will take you to the previous directory, which may give you a link to the page you are looking for.

Try more than once to get a site. Its server may be overloaded or temporarily offline, so try back later. Unfortunately the Web is changing every day and there is no guarantee sites listed in *NetGuide* will last forever. /Ed

Lost love

Dear *NetGuide*,

I was browsing through the magazines in my local newsagents and my eyes fell on the August *NetGuide*. The article that attracted my interest was the one on Blind dates online. There were a number of Personals sites both in Australia and also overseas. Some of the comments were quite candid and honest. A rarity these days. Congratulations on good reporting. But you didn't list or mention an Australian site eminently worth mentioning. Okay — it's not as big

as some of the others, but it has quality and the personal service that shines through. Who is it? The Australian Personals Network (**personals.net.au**). / **Chris Bee**

Fast track to geekdom
Dear *NetGuide*,

Fantastic, what a great mag! I have subscribed for the past 12 months and will continue to do so. My wife hates it when your mag arrives because she says I ignore her until I have finished reading it cover to cover. I really enjoy the Technical Tips section, and because of the knowledge I have gained from it, I am considered the office "Computer Geek" and often I am summonsed to help out with the different problems whether it be software or hardware. / **Christopher Potter**

Two hands and Frontpage
Dear *NetGuide*,

As a monthly buyer I keep up to date with all the latest things on the Net. I especially like the series you have now on FrontPage 2000 as I have just bought a copy of it.

Letter of the month
Dental errors
Dear *NetGuide*,

In June's edition of NetGuide — the cover line reads "fighting the plague" — the story caption on page 80, however, has "fighting the plaque". The latter is probably a yuppie thing. / **Michael Peterson**

No, it's a dental thing. Three fillings actually. /Ed

Personally I think it's great for producing top quality Web sites. With its help I have created my first Web page at **www.angelfire.com/biz3/SpangeFest/**. Even though I have just started to create the page I think that FrontPage made a difference in the quality of it. Keep publishing these great articles and Top 50 Web sites. / **Andrew Sarusi**

Who's domain?
Dear *NetGuide*,

In your latest Tech Support pages you tell the consumer they are unable to go directly to a registry to register a domain name. This is incorrect, anybody can register a domain name, it's delegation of the name that requires two servers. Please give the consumer the correct information, ISPs are making hundreds of dollars from naive

customers who believe articles such as yours and don't go to the registry themselves. / **Elisabeth Negri (Pacific Internet Australia)**

You're right. You can register a domain name directory through either NetRegistry (www.netregistry.com.au) or Melbourne IT (www.melbourneit.com.au). In fact, we've a tutorial on just how to do it in the October Issue of NetGuIde./Ed

Dear *NetGuide*,

Really enjoyed your article on Romance Online. It's obvious your research has been wide and I'm now checking out the rest of the sites you listed! I enjoyed reading it and particularly liked your comments on chat. I've had the same experience. Will be buying your magazine every month. / **Debbie Robson**

you away.

Macromedia Director 7 Shockwave Internet Studio - PC	$1,699.00
Macromedia Dreamweaver 2 on CD - PC	**$499.00**
Macromedia Fireworks on CD - PC	$339.00
Microsoft Encarta 99 Deluxe Edition on CD	$119.00
MS FrontPage 2000 on CD Full Version	$165.00
MS FrontPage 2000 on CD Upgrade	$99.00
MS Office 2000 Premium on CD Full Version	$1,179.00
MS Office 2000 Premium on CD Upgrade	**$599.00**
MS Office 2000 Professional on CD Full Version	$899.00
MS Office 2000 Professional on CD Upgrade	**$499.00**
MS Office 2000 SBE CD Upgrade	$399.00
MS Office 2000 Standard on CD Full Version	$719.00
MS Office 2000 Standard on CD Upgrade	**$399.00**
MS Publisher 2000 on CD Full Version	$149.00
MS Publisher 2000 Upgrade	$119.00
MS Word 2000 on CD Full Version	$499.00
MS Word 2000 on CD Upgrade	$129.00
Symantec Norton 2000 on CD	$65.00
Symantec Norton Anti Virus on CD	**$85.00**
Symantec Norton Utilities 4.0 on CD 95/98/NT	$115.00
Symantec Win Fax Pro Version 9.0 on CD	$129.00

Video Csrds

Creative 3D Blaster Savage4 AGP Version Retail	$259.00
Creative 3D Blaster Savage4 PCI Version Retail	**$259.00**
Creative 3D Blaster TNT2 AGP Version Retail	$369.00
Creative 3D Blaster TNT2 Ultra AGP Version Retail	**$475.00**
Diamond Viper V770 32Mb AGP Retail	$375.00
Diamond Viper V770 32Mb ULTRA AGP Retail	$499.00

Hard Disk Drives

Maxtor Diamond Max 4320 10.8Gb IDE Hard Drive	$249.00
Maxtor Diamond Max 4320 4.3Gb IDE Hard Drive	**$149.00**
Maxtor Diamond Max 4320 6.4Gb IDE Hard Drive	$189.00
Seagate Medalist 4.3Gb IDE HDD 9ms	$175.00
Seagate Medalist 6.4Gb IDE HDD 10ms	$210.00

Internet Softwsre

EISA 12 Month Ultimate Internet Access Pack	$349.00
EISA 3 Month Ultimate Internet Access Pack	$99.00

Msdis

Iomega Clik Media 10 pack	$189.00

Iomega Zip Disk 100Mb 10 Pack for PC	**$165.00**
Iomega Zip Disk 250Mb 10 Pack for PC	$279.00
Samsung Blank CDR Discs 50 Pack	$99.00

Monitors

Daiwoo 15" Digital Monitor 3 Yr On Site	$279.00
Daiwoo 17" Digital Monitor 3 Yr On Site	$499.00
Philips 105s 15" Digital Monitor	**$279.00**
Samsung Samtron 50e Digital 15" Monitor	$275.00
Samsung Samtron 70e Digital 17" Monitor	$469.00

Motherboards

Asus Tech P2B-F Mainboard for Intel Processors	**$229.00**
Asus Tech P5A Mainboard for Socket 7 Processors	$179.00
Asus Tech P5A-B Mainboard for Socket 7 Processors	$169.00

Networking

KTX 16 Port Desktop Ethernet Hub 10Mbps	$165.00
KTX 8 Port Desktop Ethernet Hub 10Mbps	**$69.00**
Xircom PCMCIA Ethernet Adaptor 10/100	$329.00

Personal Digital Assistsnts

3Com Palm IIIx Personal Digital Assistant	$679.00
3Com Palm V Personal Digital Assistant	$810.00

Processors

Intel Celeron 366Mhz Processor in Retail Box	$139.00
Intel Celeron 400Mhz Processor in Rstail Box	**$169.00**
Intel Celeron 433Mhz Processor in Retail Box	$219.00
Intel Celeron 466Mhz Processor in Retail Box	$289.00

Speskers

Cambridge PCWorks 4 Point Surround (White)	$179.00
Cambridge PCWorks Speaker System	$129.00
KTX 660W PMPO Stereo Speakers Subwoofer for PC	**$79.00**
Philips 720W PMPO USB Stereo Speakers w Subwoofer for PC	$239.00
Philips 80w Speakers with Surround and Subwoofer	$149.00

Digital Camsrss

Agfa ePhoto 780 Digital Camera	$649.00
Kodak DC 210+ Digital Camera	$899.00

Net news

GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Army gets email

The Australian Army (**www. army.gov.au**) has a new email system for its troops. The system, named Project Parakeet is managed by British Aerospace Australia. It has been built for our forces and has high quality security features to ensure communication doesn't fall into the wrong hands. The email does not pass through any public networks so its unlikely troops in the field will receive spam.

New messaging

A new messenger service linking Hotmail (**www. hotmail.com**) and AOL Instant Messenger users has been released. The free Internet-based messaging service lets you know when users are online so you can search and communicate with them instantly and privately. This service, launched in Australia by ninemsn (**ninemsn.com.au**), automatically extends to the more than 40 million registered users of Hotmail, as well as those using AOL Instant Messenger.

SET makes its debut

VISA has launched the first Secure Electronic Transaction (SET) site, marking a new era in electronic commerce in the country.

In conjunction with the ANZ bank (**www.anz.com.au**) the company relaunched Sydney's Taronga and Western Plains Zoo Web sites, which are run by the Zoological Parks Board of NSW (**www.zoo.nsw.gov.au**). The new sites allow visitors to sponsor animals using their VISA credit card.

Site developer CDT's spokesman Bahram Boutorabi says the main advantage of SET over the currently dominant Secure Socket Layer (SSL) security used by browsers in most transactions currently is that parties involved in a transaction are clearly identified, reducing the risk of fraud significantly.

"CDT has been committed to the deployment of SET standard in Australia because SET is the only mechanism available today to authenticate payments over the Internet."

A user has a digital 'wallet' on their browser, which helps identify them in transactions, while merchants are identified in a similar manner. The actual transaction is made at the banks end and the merchant does not record the credit card number on its server.

Security has been one of the primary concerns of Internet consumers and VISA is hoping it will become the standard security platform in the next couple of years as more banks, financial institutions and merchants implement the system.

After the first announcements of SET development last year it has taken VISA some time to introduce the first enabled site. Visa's executive vice president Australia/New Zealand says this is largely because it has taken time to develop and test the technology as well as getting commitment from banks and the retail industry. "It's a question of ... having it interoperable with other systems and getting the commitment of financial institutions. The financial institutions must do some work on the backend."

Mobile banking hits town

The Commonwealth Bank (**www.commbank.com.au**) and Vodafone (**www.vodafone.com.au**) have signed a strategic alliance agreement to offer a mobile phone banking service, which will enable customers to conduct a range of banking transactions using the keypad and screen of a digital mobile phone. Connected users will get a password-protected menu of banking services and real time encrypted account information displayed on the screens of their phones.

The first phase of the mobile services, which will be available in September, will enable Commonwealth bank customers who chose the Vodafone service to check their account balances, transfer funds between accounts, make bill payments and display account transaction histories via their phones.

The service employs SMS (short message service) technology to send short messages between the user, who originates an SMS request for a banking service, and the Commonwealth Bank, which triggers an SMS response to the use's mobile phone screen. It requires a Phase 2+ mobile phone and a special SIM (subscriber identity module) card, which contains Vodafone's Global System for Mobiles application and the Commonwealth's specifically developed banking application.

John Mulcahy, head of banking and financial services for the Commonwealth Bank, says mobile banking will help customers in regional areas.

ASIO to start hacking

Australia's intelligence agency ASIO is set for increased powers to spy on the Internet with proposed new legislation. The laws will let ASIO agents hack into computers, delete, add and change data on as well as tax information, provided they have a warrant for their investigation.

The head of ASIO has defended the legislation against criticism from privacy advocates, saying it is a modernisation of the current laws and could be important for the security of the country.

Where can you find your dream car?

Net news
GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Melbourne Symphony debut

The Melbourne Symphony has a new Web site to promote its performance at **www.mso.com.au**. The Orchestra is one of four Victorian performing arts companies to be awarded a grant to participate in the Performing Arts Media Library Project (PAML), a state and federal government joint initiative aimed at enabling companies to explore the creative possibilities available through the electronic extension of their work.

The site has been designed by Sausage Interactive and has been two years in the making. It has both corporate and music education components. The corporate section is aimed at current and potential concert audiences, with information on concerts, activities, booking services and programs.

Calendar pages permit users to search for performances, date, venue, conductor, composer, instrument or guest artist and a Web chat board invites users to post comments.

The education component provides interactive exploration of the Orchestra, including the ability to isolate individual instruments or to re-compose Stuart Greenbaum's *90 Minutes Circling the Earth*. Budding composers can hear the full score, select instruments and the themes as they occur or download a video-clip of the work. New compositions can also be sent back to the composer online.

Excite starts free access Gossip

Sydney Internet users are set to benefit from a recent joint venture between Excite Australia (**www.excite.com.au**) and Internet and telephone chain owner Global Gossip. The companies are offering free Internet access at any of five Sydney Global Gossip stores. Excite Australia marketing manager Joanna Finlay says Global Gossip will offer all who haven't yet been online in the harbour city to try the Net.

"At present, only 6.4 million Australians (43%) have accessed the Internet at some point and this joint venture allows the rest of the market to have their first online experience."

Kennedy death prompts auction

More than 2000 items with some vague reference to JF Kennedy Jr were on sale at Ebay (**www.ebay.com**) as Americans poured out their grief following the latest Kennedy family members tragic death.

Items auctioned included old newspapers containing articles about him, copies of the George magazine which he edited (bids of over $50 an issue with the first issue reaching $500) and a credit card slip which was suppose to contain his signature.

The latter attracted bids of over $1,300. In fact anything that mentioned any of the Kennedy's was being swept up in the fever. A paperweight with President Kennedy's picture was reaching bids of over $300.

Editor for Linux

CoffeeCup Software (**www.coffeecup.com**) has released a fully featured GTK Editor for Linux systems. The editor includes JavaScripts, Quick Start Wizard, Table and Frame designers, a huge HTML tag vocabulary, 30 background images, more than 175 animated GIFs, upwards of 140 Web icon graphics, a snippet editor, project directories, a horizontal rule designer, and a link wizard. Also included in the Linux version are PHP and VRML samples, and future versions will include support for more of the Linux specific entities.

CoffeeCup will follow with updates to take advantage of new features.

Net news
GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Super models of the cyber kind
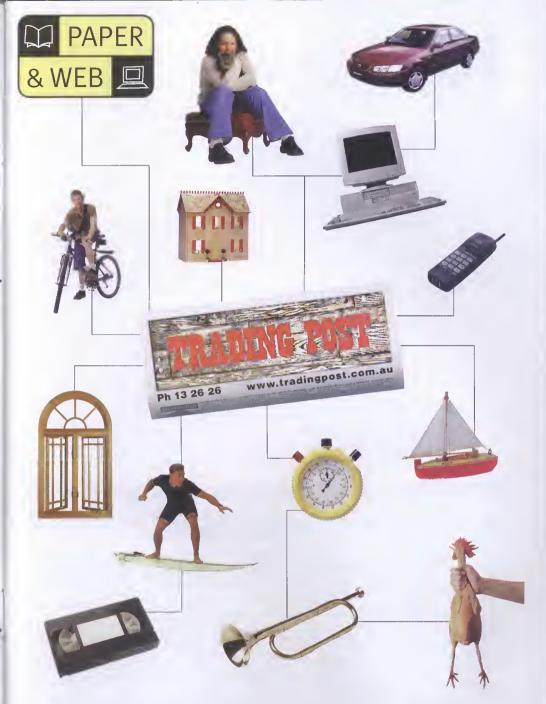
Naomi Campbell and Claudia Schiffer move over, New York super model agency Elite has created its own cyber model. Standing 6 feet tall and featuring 34B-24-35 credentials, Webbie Tookay has been launched by the company as a low maintenance alternative to the unpredictable real alternatives on the books. Costing $US1 million to create and mouldered by Swedish designer Steven Stahlberg, Webbie could be the first in a fleet of digital models for use in virtual fashion shows, Internet projects and ad campaigns for the company. She's posing at Elite's new Illusion 2K division (**www.illusion2K.com**).

CDNow adds indie downloads

Music retailer CDNow (**cdnow.com**) has added another reason for consumers to head for its store, coming to an agreement with **CDuctive. com** to offer tracks from its music catalogue of independent artists. CDNow will offer visitors over 40,000 songs for downloading via its site. The agreement provides that **CDuctive.com** will initially offer over 10,000 songs through CDNow. ●

News compiled by Daniel Fallon (neted@netguide.aust.com)

ISP news

FedEx, OzEmail join forces

Express delivery company Federal Express and ISP OzEmail (**www.ozemail.com.au**) have formed a strategic alliance to introduce e-commerce and logistics solutions for their customers. FedEx and OzEmail users will be able to visit Web-based catalogues, order products online, choose their shipping preference and track the delivery process all at the one site. FedEx director David Smith says the alliance will help businesses better manage customer demand. "Together, OzEmail and FedEx are already working towards providing customers with a seamless product incorporating the entire business cycle from order-to-delivery."

'True Blue' Aussie ISP

Dingo Blue (**www.dingoblue.com.au**) hit the market in July, touting itself as a "true blue Australian" Internet and phone company.

Financially backed by Cable and Wireless Optus the new Internet Service Provider launched with a range of service including rock bottom rates on long distance and local phone calls and Internet access.

Managing director Martin Paech says consumers are looking for integrated packages that make their lives simpler and give them confidence they are getting a good deal.

"By offering consumers a cyber service for Internet-based registration, billing and customer services we expect that the 3.2 million Australian households that own a personal computer will be interested in the self-service and Internet based delivery mechanisms we have developed," he says. Initially Dingo Blue will offer seven integrated product and service packages including local and international calls and Internet access bundles through to Internet only packages.

Paech says the company is the first to offer customers one combined bill for phone calls and Internet services. ■

Reviews

Microsoft Office 2000
✪✪✪✪✪

PLATFORM Windows 95/98/NT
PRICE Upgrades from $999
SITE www.microsoft.com.au

The Web seems to be everywhere in the latest upgrade of the popular Office suite. There are some welcome and substantial improvements to Word, Excel and the Office parts of the package, though the emphasis has been on adding Net functionality to these products.

Integration means the ability to browse the Web in many of the applications, save straight into HTML and upload seamlessly to a server and email documents from the program you're working in. Another enhancement adopts your PowerPoint demonstration so it can be presented over the Web.

There are, as always, cool new toys to play with. Among them a new clipboard function that will collect information from a number of sources and post them where you want, making it easier to share information between documents and applications.

It all comes down to how important it is for you to have the latest model and at what cost. The "premium" copy we tested needed a Pentium with 16Mb of RAM plus about 4Mb for each application running simultaneously. There are various packages available depending on how many of the porgams you need, such as the updated FrontPage and Publisher. If the Net is the way the world is going, and it would seem the answer to that is obvious, then the world will migrate to Office 2000 for the new simplicity it brings to creating and publishing for the Web.

There's a special bonus for the small business person. Launched as part of the Office packages are new applications designed to help create a business plan, track customers and design letterheads and documents for customers. A clever PhotoDraw business graphics package even lets novices create advertising banners.

Microsoft has implemented some new anti-piracy provisions with this release. Each copy will only install twice, as per the license agreement. So, if you plan on buying a copy and passing round the office or your friends you may find yourself on the phone to Microsoft Technical Support very quickly. Good for them. **/ NIGEL HORROCKS**
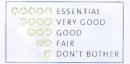
Philips USB PC video Camera (PCA645VC)
✪✪✪

PLATFORM Windows 98/NT (USB support required)
PRICE $199
SITE www.philips.com

I remember when plug and play was first launched. We thought it was great — it certainly simplified attaching new products to your computer. However, it didn't make life as simple as USB does and I unequivocally recommend any computer buyer, anywhere, makes sure their new PC has at least one USB port. Trust me, you'll like it.

The minute I plugged the Philips PC video camera into my machine it noticed. A box appeared asking me just what I thought I was doing. Well, actually, it asked me to install a disk with the camera software. So in went the disk and 10 minutes later there are images of

me on the screen. The driver software comes on both a floppy disk and on CD. It's great that the makers provide the options, but if you're hip enough to have USB, odds are you'll also be in command of a CD drive.

Another thing that makes USB even more perfect is you can unplug it and cart it off to another machine without the system doing cartwheels. And, there's no such thing as reinstalling. The computer automatically recognises the camera every time you plug it into the USB socket — believe me, I tested.

This camera is a goodie for home users. The picture quality isn't outrageously great, but then it's a fairly small unit. You'll find that playing around with the options on the "camera property page" will allow you to adjust white balance, exposure, frame rate, brightness and

other settings. Fiddle around until you get a picture that you're happy with. The microphone on the camera only generates a mono audio signal, but you can synch with other audio recording software for better quality.

The egg like unit comes bundled with Microsoft NetMeeting. If you haven't played with this software yet, do. It's a lot of fun and has some neat video conferencing and whiteboard features for chatting around the world. The CD also includes Videogram Creator software.

Beware when logging onto international chat sites that support video chat. Many of the lowest life forms populate these services and there's little censorship on the conversation topics. /
LOUISE RICHARDSON

Share*ware*

SmartNotes
◇◇◇

Platform Win 95/98/NT **Price** Freeware
Site members.xoom.com/djadrian/download/sn.zip

Now here's a handy little utility. Right click your desktop and select 'new SmartNote' to instantly create a little "Stick It" sort of memo that attaches itself to your desktop. It has a zero learning curve and comes in handy for storing brief snippets or more. And that's really all it does in a cute sort of fashion.

Copernic 99
◇◇◇◇◇

Platform Win 95/98/NT **Price** Freeware
Site www.copernic.com/copernic99.exe

The most often heard complaint about the Net is how hard it is to find anything. This freeware version can search email addresses, online bookstores, and newsgroups, providing access to some 30 information sources. Search results can be emailed or saved as HTML documents and multiple searches can be

viewed at once through the Explorer-like interface. It also features validation; sifting through the returned results and discarding the hits that can't be reached.

You'll wax eloquent too as it's familiar-feeling interface and helpful wizards propel you forth into an exciting new world, one where you can find what you're looking for. A revelation indeed.

Gooey
◇◇◇

Platform Win 95/98 **Price** Freeware
Site hypernix.www.conxion.com/gooey10.exe

Go Gooey with this Internet tool that allows people simultaneously browsing the same Web site to communicate with each other. It turns chat into a natural and integral part of Web browsing. You can chat on any site and get a constantly updated list of all the other on-line users as well as conducting group and private chats while exploring your favorite sites.

Be sure to tell all your friends, then you can say wacky things like "meet me at **www.net guide.com.au** at midnight" ●

A new entertainment era is coming and the buzzword is digital. Enthusiasts think the new TV system, which brings cinema-quality pictures, a big increase in the number of channels. Over 150,000 people downloaded Tom Petty's new single in just two days. Some in the industry are angry, saying it's like shoplifting a CD. Bruce Davis-Goff explains what Mp3 is, how it works and the varying sides to the debate.

If you arrived late for the Mp3 party, you may be puzzled by the media commotion that's erupted around this new audio compression standard.

The controversy is over the potential impact of Mp3 on the music industry. Previously, the size of CD quality files made pirating and online distribution unattractive. However the small file size of Mp3 has led to a flood of online copying, swapping and posting that's left the music industry scrabbling to regain the initiative. So what exactly is Mp3?

Mp3 is an abbreviation for MPEG layer 3, a clever way of encoding digitised music. It's an audio component of MPEG compression developed for video and it's jolly efficient, compressing an audio file to about one-12th its original size.

This means a 40-megabyte, three-minute CD track becomes around three meg when encoded in MP3 format, taking about eight minutes or less to download on a 56k connection.

Mp3 works by using perceptual coding, tossing out all the bits that the human ear will most likely never hear, effectively minimising the file size. The files created are CD quality. The general consensus is they don't sound better or worse than CDs, just different.

For a full technical run-down visit **www.iis. fhg.de/amm/techinf/layer3/,** at the Fraunhofer Institut in Germany where MP3 was born.

MP3

FEEL THE PULSE OF MUSIC ON THE NET

That doesn't impress me very much

Mp3 has been a classic grassroots revolution and a whole bundle of freely available music has been the result. But there's a legal catch. If you don't own the rights to a piece of music, it's illegal to copy and distribute it.

A recent legal case over Telstra (**www.telstra .com.au**) hold music, in which loyalties were in dispute, had the far reaching effect of inspiring the Australia Performing Rights Association (**www. apra.com.au**) to come to a separate out of court agreement over MP3 with the Australian Internet Industry Association (**www.aiia. com.au**), which represents service providers around the country.

The AIIA pays a fee on behalf of ISPs so they can carry MP3 down to your computer. For APRA, which watches over the copyright of songs (the music and the lyrics), and the Australian Recording Industry Association (**www.aria.com.au**), which controls copyright over the sound recordings of music, MP3 has also been a confronting technological advancement. Pirates have been handed an easy way to copy recordings and pass them on world wide.

APRA broadcast and online officer Jeffrey Bartolomei says that although the division of licensing responsibility between the two bodies has confused people, the MP3 legal issue is clear. "Basically you need permission from both owners of works and sound recordings to make reproductions. Otherwise it's copyright infringement. And that's the big deal with MP3 because so many people are making unauthorised reproductions of CD tracks, so they are making reproductions of the [music and lyrics] works and the are making reproductions of the sound recordings."

And the big loser from this copyright infringement is the artist, he says. "Everyone seems to think it stops at the record company...it's the artist in the end who's not going to bother next time because he didn't sell because 8,000 college kids copied it."

However, Bartolomei says the licensing of music is set to change soon with the introduction of new government regulation to simplify it and address some of the online concerns.

Another response has been the Madison Project, sponsored by IBM and the big five record labels (EMI, BMG, Sony Music, Universal Music, and Warner Music). It's a secure system for selling and delivering music online but it already looks shaky. It requires cable-sized bandwidth and freeware already exists to get around the copyright controls. Damn hackers.

It goes further than pirating; traditionally, record labels have been the only ones with enough capital

MP3

clout to finance the recording, promotion and distribution of new artists. Now an unknown can promote and distribute directly to the listener. Bye bye middleman — hello global audience. Any band with a sound to push can distribute it over the Net.

It's also proving divisive within the industry. Some artists have been blocked from releasing MP3 material by their labels while others like the Beastie Boys and Public Enemy have seen the potential and leapt aboard.

Mp3 advocates think the music industry just don't get it, their initiatives are too little too late. They argue Mp3 is an open standard that's here to stay and can't be stopped. Certainly the smart operators will be figuring ways to remain profitable in the new Net economy where giving away things for free somehow works quite well.

Whatever happens, expect an exciting half a year as the players converge and try to sort out the rules.

Music sounds better with you

MP3 players are a dime a dozen, the latest Microsoft Media Player (**microsoft.com/windows/ mediaplayer**) does it, and so does the G2 Real Player (**www.real.com**) with the help of a plug-in.

But if you want a serious dedicated MP3 player, there's no going past WinAmp. Over ten million copies downloaded and still the best, WinAmp (**www.winamp.com**) can alter pitch and graphic EQ in real time, make playlists and display a spectrum analyser amongst other tricks.

Audio Input plug-ins (**www.mp3.com/software/ plugin.html**) let you input other formats, for example Real Audio and Audio Output plug-ins can do things like cross fades between tracks.

It's more functional than your average CD player, though it plays CDs as well, even downloading track listings from an online CDDB (CD Database).

Whatever player you get, playing your files is usually drag and drop or double click simple, but first you have to find some MP3s.

Soul Searching

"Let me get the music," you cry. Chaos Music's (**www.cmm.com.au/freetracks**) music file search engine is probably the perfect tool to get you started. Free Tracks indexes and searches digital music formats of all kinds and varieties on the Web — including MP3 — to find the music the user is seeking. It then provides you with the ability to create a playlist of material, which can be assembled and played using Microsoft Windows Media Player.

Another Australian newcomer, **www.mp3.com .au**, is set to launch soon and promises to use the medium to promote up-and-coming Australian artists.

Prepared to be spoiled for choice? **www.MP3. com** alone has tens of thousands of legal songs in dozens of genres along with audio books and comedy, all free to download. They sell DAM (Digital Automatic Music) CDs on behalf of artists, which contain the album in the usual CD format as well as MP3. They can sell *your* music from their site too.

MP3 search engines are a good way to find specific songs and Lycos have launched one of the best that searches over half a million MP3 files. Try it at **mp3.lycos.com**. Just entering a song title or artists name will give you a list of results you can click on to download.

Another approach is a dedicated MP3 sniffer like MP3-Wolf. It's a search robot that scans MP3 Web sites on the net and compiles an index of Mp3, MIDI, Wave and other music files as well as a list of ftp sites, and music related links. Get it at **www.sdtek.com/msw/bin/mwolf104.exe**.

You may come across files that are badly encoded or corrupted and won't work. You'll also find some sites rename files by changing the extensions. This is done to hide illegal stuff basically and anything you download will need to be renamed to a MP3 extension to play.

In fact a simple search for Mp3 on any old engine will find more material than you ever dreamed existed and the only problem will be your conscience. A lot of Mp3s out there are illegal, but there's also a wealth of legal, free, new and unheard musical treasures waiting to be heard. Free your hard drive and downloads will follow.

Stir it up

Rolling your own is a simple process of encoding a piece of music in the MP3 format. Usually you'll be starting with a CD track you want to encode. The first step is to digitise this onto your computer and that's where a piece of software called a CD ripper comes in. Rippers read tracks off a CD and dump them on your hard drive, usually in wav format. This is called digital audio extraction and some older CD drives don't support it.

From here you'll need an MP3 encoder to convert that bulky wav into an Mp3. The easiest solution however is a program like Audiocatalyst from **www.xingtech.com/mp3/audiocatalyst/ trial.html**. (Shareware US$29.95). It grabs tracks straight off the CD, converting them to Mp3s in one simple step.

Most encoders will let you edit the ID3 tag information for track name, artist etc as well as specifying bitrate and other parameters. The last step is using your CD burner to compile your own greatest Mp3 hits. You'll have to play them on your PC, but the encoding process is reversible, Mp3s off the Net can be converted back to wav files and burnt to a CD to play on your home stereo.

You've come a long way baby

The future of Mp3 looks very bright. The popularity of MP3 has already encouraged the companies to build and launch portable digital players so you can download your MP3 files and enjoy them on the run.

MP3

Take the Rio portable MP3 (**www.diamondmm .com/products/current/rio.cfm**) for instance. This player (reviewed May 1999) is a portable skip-free CD-quality player similar in size and weight to a deck of playing cards – like a small Walkman.

More recently the Nomad from Creative Pacific (**www.cppl.com.au**) has been launched to satisfy the same demand – download tracks from the Net onto it and groove to the music in your travels. Although they've started out a little too expensive, as with many digital goods, they'll come down in price as time goes by.

Mp3 cars stereos aren't too far behind, but of particular interest is a hybrid machine from Naiam Corporation (**www.naiam.com**). Called the CD-MP, it plays standard CDs as well as Mp3 written to a CD-R. Since the Mp3 file size is so small, you can fit around 12 hours of music on one disk and this makes the CD-MP a very desirable kit indeed.

The Mp3 format can also be streamed and this opens the door for individuals to Netcast (broadcasting to the Net to multi-recipients). Currently a plugin is available for WinAmp that lets anyone with a high-speed connection (ISDN) broadcast their own music show, including live performances, via a free server network. The program to do it is called Shoutcast (**www.shoutcast.com**).

If you just want to listen, you only need Win Amp and the location of a Shoutcast server to point it at. There's a list of currently playing servers at **yp.shoutcast.com**.

The amount and variety being broadcast at any given moment is staggering. One thing that's certain, Mp3 has attained rapid and widespread popularity and won't be going away in a hurry. It's got the potential to change how and where we get our music and how we play it. It liberates the artist from the perceived tyranny of recording contracts and gives the little person the tools to play bigtime. Quite a revolution all in all. ●

HOT SITES FOR MP3

Freetracks	www.cmm.com.au/freetracks/
MP3.com.au	www.mp3.com.au
MP3.com	www.mp3.com
MP3 Now	www.mp3now.com
MP3-2000	www.mp3-2000.com
Audio Dreams	www.audiodreams.com
AudioForge	www.audioforge.net
The Jukebox	mp3.thejukebox.com
Audio Find	www.audiofind.com
Good Noise	www.goodnoise.com
World Wide Bands	www.worldwidebands.com
MP3 Library	mp3library.webjump.com

MP3 SOFTWARE

Daily MP3	www.dailymp3.com/mp3.html
Winfiles	www.winfiles.com/apps/98/ sound-mpeg.html
MP3.Com	www.mp3.com/software/
MP3 Park	www.mp3park.com
Audio Software	www.audiosoftware.com

MP3 SEARCH ENGINES
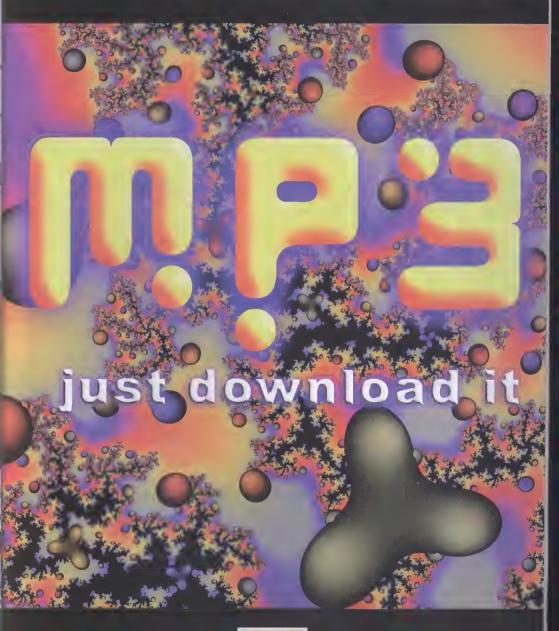
Music Seek	www.musicseek.net
Lycos MP3	Search mp3.lycos.com
Top Ten Search Engines	www.mp3now.com/html/ mp3_search.html
MP3 Search	www.mp3search.nu
2Look4	www.2look4.com
MP3 Meta Search	www.mp3meta.com

GENERAL MP3 RESOURCES

MPEg.org	www.mpeg.org/MPEG
Webmasters World	www.webmastersworld.net
MP3 Site	www.mp3site.com
Cyber Tropix	www.cybertropix.com
MP3 Place	www.mp3place.net
The World Of MP3 www.mp3.dk	
Cnet Topic Centre www.cnet.com/Content/Gadgets/ Special/MP3	

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

They're not the toys they used to be. Louise Richardson, Rory Fitzpatrick and Sandra Vogel discover the joys of living with a personal organiser.

Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) are the hottest toy around for trendy young things at the moment. Snappy marketing abounds to attempt to convince you that you can have what

is basically a desktop in your pocket, plus it'll shine your shoes and bring you a morning coffee and toast. Well, not quite.

A lot has changed since *NetGuide* first looked at these devices and their use for connecting to the Internet. Way back then connectivity was possible, amidst confusing instructions and a tangle of cords. However, new developments in WAP technology (wireless application protocol), portable modems and ease of use make these a serious consideration for those who want the Internet in their pocket.

We pulled six of the latest models out of the closet and put them through their paces.

Compaq Aero
The Aero is a fairly sleek looking unit, with a similar, but chunkier, look to the 3Com Palm. Most of the data entry is handled by way of character recognition — this can get laborious but it is better than having a too-tiny keyboard.

The unit connects easily to your desktop via a serial cable, which means that you can download software from your computer or the Web. This is a very necessary activity for any machine that runs Windows CE as the Aero does. The Aero comes with a docking device for recharging the batteries and if you've got an infra-red port then you can use the Aero's IR port to do your transfers without the wires — very nifty.

The Flash Card Slot on the top of the unit takes a 56K modem, additional memory, or LAN cards, so connecting the unit is relatively straight-forward. The Windows CE operating system has dialup configurations as standard. The Aero can take up to 17 minutes of sound recording, and has great audio quality.

HP Jornada
When the Hewlett-Packard Jornada 420 was announced, it was one of the first colour handheld units, but things move fast and since then there have been similar products released.

Four action buttons sit along the left-hand side for thumb operation when the unit is held in the left hand. These include a rocker switch for selection of options, an exit button which quits dialogs and menus, and a shortcut to opening the Start menu.

The left of the machine also houses the record button which activates the built-in voice recorder and the microphone. There is room for a single CompactFlash card which slots in the top of the unit to provide additional applications or memory expansion and modems.

The HP 420 has several additional applications over and above those supplied as part of CE. Most

notably, the suite includes EzExplorer which is a Windows Explorer for CE. It can be used to perform a range of basic operations including find, copy, delete, rename and attribute changes.

Psion Series 5

I have to confess to finding it hard to get enthusiastic about the Psion Series 5 with it's new big brother, the Series 5mx, just around the corner. The Psion has been the leading light in the "we don't need Windows" faction for a number of years and the new model further supports the notion that there is another way.

Psion set out to build a platform specific to handheld computing and the EPOC operating system does this very well. It features organiser and database functions, word processing, spreadsheet and presentation makers and syncs effortlessly to you desktop.

One of the greatest features is the infrared modem technology. With a suitable IR mobile phone you can connect to the Internet without wires to send and receive emails and browse the Internet. The software supports forms, tables, gifs, animated gifs and jpegs, which gives it online performance above the others.

The Series 5mx will still have a grey-scale display, but the memory is upped to 16Mb and the communications features have been improved for both connecting your desktop and via modem or wireless to the Internet.

Palm V

There is something about the simplicity of the Palm devices that make them outstanding among others. The Palm V, like its predecessors, has all the essentials and with an eager shareware developers following, there's plenty of scope to find the tools you need somewhere on the Web. It's slimmer and lighter than any other handheld on the market, with an anodised aluminium finish and a leather cover.

The unit synchs effortlessly with desktop applications through a cradle unit, which also acts as a battery recharger. A snap-on modem attaches to the base of the unit allowing you to connect to the Internet. Because of the small grey-scale screen Web site browsing isn't a major attraction of the Palm V, however many news sites are creating Palm-friendly versions of their content which you can access live or download with desktop software applications.

Nokia 9110

In terms of mobile telephones the Nokia 9110 is a beast, though a much improved beast. In terms of a PDA, this unit has it all in one. It looks like a phone, but opens in two to reveal a LCD screen and keyboard.

It connects to your PC, but even better, without cable you can dial directly into the Internet and download mail or surf the Net. Granted the screen is a tad small, but the benefits of having an all in one system negate this.

On the downside, the keyboard on the 9110 isn't the most inspired, in fact, it's shiny slightly raised keys aren't conducive to typing large documents.

Philips Nino

At last a handheld that isn't black, grey or silver. Similar in size to the Compaq Aero, the Nino has also avoided the temptation to place its feature buttons on the front of the unit, instead placing these down the side for easy access when holding in your hand. They've put a speaker on the front of the unit, which gives relatively good sound quality.

Functionality wise there's not much variation between the Nino and other CE devices and has all the capabilities for Internet connection, though you will need a CompactFlash modem card for connecting.

A new version, the Nino 500, is due for release soon incorporating a colour screen and rechargeable Nikel-Metal Hydride battery. ■

HANDHELD COMPUTERS

WHAT TO CHOOSE

Deciding on a handheld unit really comes down to personal preference. If you're a Windows user and like the operating system interface, all the Windows CE devices provide similar functionality. We suggest you pick the unit that matches your briefcase.

If you want style, the Palm V has it all rolled into one. If you want super-functionality then Psion is the ultimate - in fact, there's not much this unit won't do and, in fact, many things it does you can't do from a desktop. If you want to wow your friends then the Nokia 9110 is for you, though watch this space. Similar functions are likely to dribble down into small mobile phones and PDAs in the next few years.

	COMPAQ AERO 2100 PALM SIZE PC	HEWLETT PACKARD JORNADA 420	PSION SERIES5
	⦿⦿⦿⦿	⦿⦿⦿⦿	⦿⦿⦿
MANUFACTURER	Compaq www.compaq.com	Hewlett-Packard www.hp.com	Psion www.psion.com
PRICE	$995	$449	$799
SCREEN	TFT colour	LCD colour	LCD greyscale
BATTERY	Lithium-ion/rechargable	Lithium-ion/rechargable	2xAA batteries (35hrs)
MEMORY	16Mb	8Mb RAM/8Mb ROM	8Mb RAM/6Mb ROM
SOUND	yes (17 mins. voice recording)	yes	yes
MODEM	CompactFlash Card	CompactFlash Card	PCMCIA slot
OS	Windows CE	Windows CE	Psion EPOC32
DATAENTRY	handwriting recognition	touchscreen & onscreen keyboard	keyboard & touchscreen
INFRARED	yes	yes	yes

	PALM V	NOKIA 9110	PHILIPS NINO 200
	⦿⦿⦿⦿⦿	⦿⦿⦿	⦿⦿⦿
MANUFACTURER	3Com www.palm.com	Nokia www.nokia.com	Philips www.philips.com
PRICE	$999	$1999	$699
SCREEN	LCD greyscale	LCD greyscale	LCD greyscale
BATTERY	internal Lithium-ion recharged from cradle	Lithium-ion/rechargable	3xAAA batteries (opt. NIMH battery pack)
MEMORY	2Mb	2Mb	8Mb
SOUND	no	yes	yes
MODEM	snap-on 33.6 Kbps	inbuilt 14.4 Kbps	CompactFlash slot
OS	Palm OS	GEOS	Windows CE
DATAENTRY	Palm Graffiti	keyboard	touchscreen & onscreen keyboard
INFRARED	yes	yes	yes
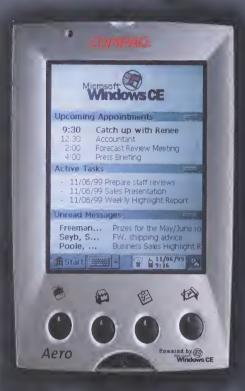
The week looking a bit chaotic?

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THROWING UP JUNK

Nigel Horrocks finds people collect anything. Some of them may be crazy, but there's plenty of others doing it online too.

One person's junk is another person's treasure and there's plenty of evidence of that on the Internet. If your friends thought you were a little odd for being obsessed

about collecting a certain thing, you will probably find like-minded collectors somewhere else in the world and more than likely, on the World Wide Web.

Odd? Well, not all collections fit that category. Many of us started collecting with postage stamps, but it's hard to imagine how people eventually graduate to something like airline sickness bags. There are 10 sites on the Net by such collectors. Hopefully they are unused bags.

Britain's Charles Sant (**www.netlink.co.uk/users/gnarly/sickbag.html**) claims it is a very normal sort of thing to do. The highlight of his collection are those from airlines that have gone out of business. His most prized is probably one which says "NATO, bag, air sickness" and is then followed by a serial number. Sant says it is collecting history, and adds that he wanted to do something "more exciting than a standard home page".

"Trying to think what would set me apart from others, I remembered my small sick bag collection. At that point I had only 40 bags."

Like any collection, once you get enthused you find out there is more to an air sickness bag than you might imagine. He has found bags made out of blotting paper (Aeroflot), ones with a game to play on the back (Braathens Safe), and ones doubling as an envelope for a film development company (Ansett).

Sant says at first people emailed him that it was a strange thing to collect.

"Now I'm getting recognition for the fact that it is an unusual subject for a Web page."

We're not alone

Showing off his passion through the Net means Sant has found he is not alone in his interest. "It's amazing how many fellow collectors have come out of the woodwork, and since the Internet is a global phenomenon, these other collectors have a different emphasis to their collections.

"I now have contacts all around the world who have swapped bags with me. I am fully aware that it was by the medium of the Internet that my own collection has grown to such a large extent. 40bags to 650+ would be fairly difficult to do without either a lot of flying or a lot of contacts. The Internet has given me the latter."

Norwegian Bjorn Christian Torrissen is just as passionate **www.pvv.unit.no/~bct/spypose/**). Sickness bags, he says, don't get the attention they deserve, "except in those short, intense moments they are very much needed and appreciated".

As with any hobby there is a lingo you have to learn to recognise fellow enthusiasts. Bjorn unveils a social code about asking for such bags in real cases of emergency. His list includes the polite request to an airline worker when you are seated in business class. The recommended line is: "Excuse me, Would you be able to help me with a device for regurgitating, somewhere in the immediate future?" But if you are drunk and on a bus, the request is far less formal. A garbled, "Stop the bus, I'm about to vomit" does the trick.

Sharp thinking

In the Netherlands, Johan and Anky collect pencil sharpeners (**members.aol.com/AjHolland/**

pencil.htm). They have over 300 but hope the Internet will help them find of the ones on their wish list. They include a pencil sharpener with a tyrannosaurus on it and ones with star signs on them.

Another man has started collecting rubber bands. It began when he was a supervisor of children at an American YMCA when the kids started flicking rubber bands at each other. He took them off the children and from that start has developed a giant ball, six years in the making. None of the bands have been bought — they have all been donated by someone over the Net or stolen!

There is a fine line between collectors and hoarders. Local collector Scott Wegener obviously doesn't like to throw anything away, even if it is definitely worthless. He collects used lottery-type tickets. He gives himself respectability by calling himself a 'lotologist'. Scott says until he put up his site (**www.scottware.com.au/tickets/index.htm**), he didn't know of anyone else who collected discarded tickets and began to think that he was as crazy as people said.

One month later, he had his first email from another collector. Now he has met so many other collectors — including those in the USA, Romania, Israel and Spain — it's costing him a fortune in postage to trade tickets. When you're desperate for something, you get imaginative about how to do deals. He has traded overseas discarded tickets for Disneyland maps, business cards, two-minute noodle collector cards and postcards of trams.
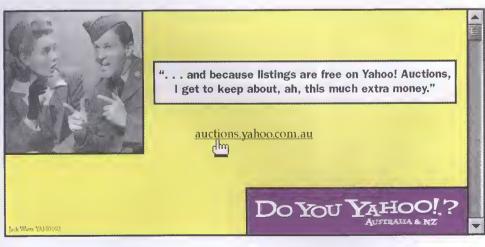
Secret hiding places

Some collectors unashamedly collect rubbish. 32-year-old Scot David Nelson was aged seven when he bought his first record player (a Fitzroy wind-up portable from a junk shop for £2.50). The shop also sold 78s for 5 pence each, and much of his childhood pocket money went on these instead of on marbles and comics.

He was hooked. As a teenager, he loved the 1960s "British psychedelic" sound, as anthologised on such compilation LPs as "Chocolate Soup for Diabetics", and eagerly sought out original 45s from this era.

"By the end of the 80s, prices for these were getting, frankly, silly and it was then I hit on the idea of collecting crap records (**ourworld.compuserve.**

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Stuff.com.au

COLLECTING & TRADING

com/homepages/plasterboard_towers/), as a kind of antidote to the increasingly pretentious attitudes towards record buying as exemplified in *Record Collector* magazine. I mean, £700 for a piece of plastic? Get real."

"I live in a very small flat so I can't keep everything I pick up from jumble sales and my collection has quite a high 'throughput rate'. I like to keep a representative sample of most categories though, and have enough space left just in case I come upon BBC DJ Richard Baker's single 'Two Little Sausages' or golfer Tony Jacklin's attempt at 'The Lincolnshire Poacher'."

If you start to think many collectors are a bit screwy, check out (members.aol.com/corkskrue/icca.htm). These are — by their own description — corkscrew addicts. Most of us can never find a corkscrew when we are about to open the wine for the barbecue, but these people not only find as many as they can but actually have meetings to discuss corkscrews or email each other about them.

Wheeling and dealing

A new craze on the Web, which is sure to find enthusiasm amongst collectors of all kinds is online auctions. Australian collectors and traders are now being spoiled by a number of recently launched auction sites.

The classifieds market, which has been so successful for newspapers and print publications, is making a natural progression to online auctions, allowing buyers to easily search for the goods they are after and giving sellers a cheap way to find a buyer.

If you're into collecting and trading particular items, or even if you just want to clear your garage of unloved items, these auctions sites are definitely worth a try. You won't be the first.

The site with a particular focus on collectors is the recently opened **stuff.com.au**. After registering at the site with your credit card details you can start into the auction action. Sellers put up details and a photo of the item for sale and set a time limit, such as a week or month, in which buyers have time to log onto the site and make a bid.

stuff.com.au's creator, Simon van Wyk, says collectors are already finding the site useful for trading. "There's a massive demand for anything from

COLLECTING & TRADING

classic collectibles such as coins, stamps, comics and Phonecards — the perennial favourites like Barbie dolls and Star Wars figurines — and the latest trendsetters such as Olympic pins, Yowies, Furbies or Beanie Babies."

Ibuy's (**www.ibuy.com.au**) Marco Ciobo says the number of punters looking to trade online is forcing the traditional leaders in classifieds into cyber auctions. "Most of the players now I think are conceiving that there is going to be a fundamental shift in the way consumers are going to liquidate items. In the past they've put it in the Trading Post (**www.trading post.com.au**) or the classifieds, five years down the track we'll see a good bulk of that volume moving through person to person online auctions and person to business auction sites."

First off the block was Yahoo! Auctions (**auctions.yahoo.com.au**), which, apart from featuring a number of important tools, is free to use. Yahoo! Auction content producer Rachel Watt says apart from it being free, the site has plenty of functionality to attract users.

"We have a bunch of tools so people can monitor their auctions. For sellers they can monitor how their auctions are doing, and buyers can rate sellers if they've had a problem with a seller in the past."

Also new to the market, is Fairfax and Classifed Ventures' **sold.com.au**, which also let's traders do business after registering for a small fee. It features a search facility and directory of categories, covering everything from paintings to vintage car parts, to help traders get around. A 3.5% commission is taken on the sale price of the successful bid and buyers are notified via email.

CEO Martin Hoffman says convenience is the key advantage driving traders to online auctions. "It's easy to post photos and also links to other Web sites, so you can describe the product more fully.

And you can complete the transaction online ... you don't have to drive over to the persons house."

Dews says online auctions are also kinder on your purse. "It's a lot cheaper to get something up than any print classifieds medium, so you're only paying any fee if and when it sells."

Newcomer Ozetrader (**www.ozetrader.com.au**) business development manager Brenda James says auctions have been a huge success in the US because of its culture of mail order catalogues. James says mostly collectable items are sold on its site.

US auction giant Ebay (**www.ebay.com**) is set to come out to Australia shortly as well, giving buyers and sellers even more choice. ●

COLLECTION POINTS

Autographs	u ail bepl ffit rad un/~ddavsan/autos.html
Barbie Dolls	www.dolliedish.com/barbie
Beer Bottles	tuoppi.oulu.fi/kbs/beer/
Beer Cans	people.enternet.com.au/~rayeve/
Beer Caps	www.cam.org/~kibi/TBCP/
Beer Coasters	www.beercoasters.com
Books	www.lucashooks.com/collect.html
Calculators	www.geocities.com/Silion_Valley/Park/7227/
Cameras	members.aol.com/camcollect/kodak.html
Cereal Packets	www.wenel.net/~sandy/crackerbox.htm
Cards	www.nrd.net/~gutaria/
Coke Bottles	members.aol.com/Nusanz/cocacola.html
Coins	www.coin-universe.com
Computers	www.computingmuseum.com
Corkscrews	www.corkscrew.com
Disney Stuff	home.earthlink.net/~wlee/
Dolls	www.dollfinder.com
Knives	www.bladeforums.com
Licence plates	daisibki_ail_galpcz.edu/~ladtamk/
Marbles	www.glassforet.net/duke/
Model boxes	www.geocties.com/Hea_Hand/Plains/9c99/
Movie Cameras	www.sssdtind/~wlchr/richorod.html
Phonecards	www.tsl.lt/~diccторl/
Phonographs	www.inkyfingers.com/Record.html
Radios	www.accessone.com/~philn/
Sauces	www.wlu.edu/~jtravers/sauce.htm
Shot glasses	members.aol.com/ggrasso/page1.htm
Stamps	www.stampworld.com
Tuttles	www.tuttle.org/index.html/tashat
Trading Cards	24.4.42.td/more/
Washing Machines	www.oldewash.com

SOLD.com.au

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From boogie boards to motherboards, from video cameras to guitars, from furniture to funk – you name it, you can buy or sell it at SOLD.com.au – Australia's exciting 24-hour Internet auction site. So whatever it is that you have to buy or sell, join an online auction now at www.SOLD.com.au and it won't be long before it's going, going, gone to the highest bidder.

MARK YOUR PLACE

Part two of the journey towards creating a Web site involves getting your hands dirty. Louise Richardson outlines what to expect from designers, software and the Web itself.

LAST MONTH WE LOOKED at the ins and outs of planning for your Web site. With a concrete concept in mind, content arranged and goals set for the operation and purpose of the site you're halfway there. Now for the fun stuff.

Fun stuff or scary stuff – it's hard to decide. There are two streams of thought. Some say it's vital to have something on the Web, even if it's the ugliest, most boring site ever, so that customers will be able to find you online. Others say if you don't do it right you shouldn't do it at all. First impressions count and a bad site will put visitors off forever.

There are numerous options when it comes to doing the building. You can create it in-house using one of a number of Web design packages on the market or you can go to a professional Web design house and let them do the hard work.

SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM

One of the major benefits of outsourcing the design work is that you inherit the experiences of all other sites built by your chosen Web design company. This is a young industry with no rules and very few guidelines on what makes a successful Web site.

Web design companies have developed over the past few years from pony-tailed university students into highly skilled, professional companies. If anyone can give you advice, these guys can.

It pays to have your planning in process before you pull these guys in. However, don't expect to turn up with a detailed brief and have them create it as is. There are invariably issues you haven't considered, or haven't even dreamed off. These guys will help you adapt your plans and content so you get the best from your Web site.

Pick a company that fits your corporate culture and offers services that will help you through the planning, design, maintenance and future development of the site. If you think you might incorporate online shopping services in the future, don't pick a

design company that can't step you through secure transactions and ordering systems.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1. Complete Site Design
A design house should be able to do the whole job, taking your content (and often helping you create it) and creating a clean, easily navigated site with it.

2. Ongoing Maintenance
Don't order Web design like you order pizza, think of it more like a new car, complete with an ongoing service contract. Make sure the design company you choose will fix any teething problems and help you continue to develop your site.

3. Programming
If you want to include even the most basic of interactivity on your site you'll need to find someone with some programming expertise. Simple interactivity like feedback forms and message boards will add value to your site.

4. Database integration
If you've lots of information to convey through your site it pays to look at integrating it with your existing inventory database, or creating one to deliver your content.

5. E-commerce and security
Safe selling is good selling on the Internet. If you're planning to do it, don't even bother to try without some sort of secure e-commerce system.

6. Web advertising and search engine positioning
Ask your design house how to promote your site on the Internet. They'll understand banner advertising and should create some banners for you as part of the site development.

7. Fancy bits
Once the basics are done then you can think about the fancy bits like Shockwave, RealAudio and Quicktime movies. These are all great addi-

tions to a Web site, but don't get caught in making them the main attraction. Incorporate these elements into the site so they work well, but don't alienate users who don't want them.

YOUR OWN HEADACHE

Despite the benefits of using a design house, budgets sometimes mean the work gets done in-house. If you're lucky enough you'll have staff onsite with the expertise to do the job. If someone is starting from scratch, it's a long, long road to the Web.

Despite the best marketing efforts of Web design software manufacturers, you don't actually need a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor to create your site. Many sites can be built using the simple notepad program that comes standard with most operating systems. If you go down this road you will need some fairly intensive instruction on how to write HTML code. It's a simple and intuitive programming language and whether you decide to use a WYSIWYG editor or fly solo, it pays to familiarise yourself with the basics.

There are plenty of packages to help you out. Some of the more popular packages include:

- **FrontPage (www.microsoft.com)**
Great for home users and acceptable for small business sites.

- **Adobe GoLive (www.adobe.com)**
Powerful visual design tool that's well integrated with Adobe graphics products, such as Photoshop and ImageReady.

- **Dreamweaver (www.macromedia.com)**
Builds robust and clean HTML. Also heavily integrated with Macromedia products, such as Flash and Fireworks.

- **HotDog Pro (www.sausage.com.au)**
Aimed at the professional designer this software

has great Web site management features — handy for large sites.

- **HomePage (www.claris.com)**
Designed to build the functionality of FileMaker Pro databases into a Web site. Great for database driven forms.

- **ColdFusion (www.allaire.com)**
High-end database integration Web site development tool. Includes the ColdFusion Studio HTML editor for page creation.

- **NetObjects Fusion (www.netobjects.com)**
Designed for businesses with easily implemented e-commerce and database access built in.

Deciding on the software to use is the easy part. The actual creation will be time consuming and frustrating. Don't be put off though, getting a Web page to work and the elements positioned where you want them on the page is extremely satisfying.

One of the main frustrations of creating pages on the Web is that, unlike other mediums, what you create may not be what others see. The main browsers have different ways of displaying content. Some Internet Explorer functions are not supported by Netscape Navigator and vice versa. Likewise, a site that looks great on the Macintosh you created it with may not be quite as special on a PC.

Whatever you create you'll need to test it with different browser versions and different computers until to you get it right.

WEB SITE IN A BOX

Some new solutions are coming onto the market that will let you create your Web site using a system of templates. The functionality behind these sites is surprising, with many offering database integration, secure e-commerce services and other systems as modules to a basic Web site package.

There are a number of systems turning up on the market to provide an easy template based method of creating your Web site.

LiveBuilder (**www.livebuider.com.au**) offers an instant-site product. Unlike normal Web design process, where you design, refine, test and finally upload your site to the Web, LiveBuilder creates the site on the spot and publishes it live to the Web as you go.

IBM Home Page Creator released its Home Page Creator service (**www.ibm.com/hpc/aust/**) earlier this year. The idea behind the service is to make Web development as simple as possible. The service offers secure transaction technologies and other tools for creating graphics, registering domain names and publishing to the Web.

Likewise, MultiEmedia.com (**www.mcom.com.au**) has recently released an e-commerce Web development tool called ZoneStudio. The products provides a series of templates to choose from and is accessed over the Internet through a browser interface with options for secure e-commerce functions.

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

Whatever you do, there are a few rules that do apply, though they aren't always followed.

1. Consistent navigation and style. Make it easy to find your way around and try to keep a common theme between pages.
2. Provide text menus at the bottom of each page. Give people options — don't let them get lost.
3. Minimise clicking. Keep the site as flat as possible. More than three "clicks" to the juicy content is too much.
4. Watch bandwidth. Keep the file size for your images small.
5. Use "alt" tags. If they're browsing your site

with images switched off at least tell them what they're missing.

6. Think about monitors. The smallest are 640 x 480 pixels. Start your design with this in mind.
7. Put the important stuff on the front page.
8. Keep it simple.

There is a wealth of information on the Internet that will help you learn about page design. Your first stop should be the World Wide Web Consortium at **www.w3.org**. This group is responsible for the HTML standard and decides which features will be used universally on the Internet. It pays to build your site to comply with the latest standard and you'll find more information on HTML here than you can read in the week.

See our sidebar for other Web design helper sites on the Web. There are plenty of groups who will help you with your problems and give you advice for your own little mecca on the Internet.

TIPS FROM THE TOP
Avarice Interactive
(www.avarice.com.au)
managing director Marek Samulski says:
"The most effective way to assess the perspective of the clients' needs, is to understand their company and ask what they would want to achieve from their Web site — why do they require a site? What type of interaction do you have with your clientele, suppliers and/or distributors currently? What is the target

market the site is aimed at capturing? What type of sites have the functionality and features that you like (not necessarily competitors)? What is the current infrastructure for product order and distribution as well as general inquiries? What is your short term and long term vision and objectives for your company and Web site?"

Spike (www.spike.com.au)
CEO Chris O'Hanlon says:

"Bring in a Web company right from the moment you imagine you want to be in this medium. Avoid doing what everyone else in your competitive space has done. Straight away start planning for the new business this new structure will bring you. You need to be prepared to invest in marketing, and budget generously and separately from what you intend to spend on the Web site development."

Massive Interactive
(www.massive.com.au)
Creative director Derek Ellis questions:

"What does your business do? What do you want your Web site to do? Is it promoting brand, saving resources (eg reducing call centre costs), supplementing ordinary order channels (many people browse on the Web but buy in bricks and mortar stores), e-commerce, making services available 24 hours and globally? What do you expect to spend and what return do you expect on your investment? What are your competitors doing on the Web, and why? What works for them and what doesn't? What have they spent? Look at rival's sites — locally and globally. What do your clients/customers want? Get informal responses, or do focus groups or online questionnaires, if you can af ford it. And finally, talk to a Web developer to get costings." ●

HTML HELP

www.w3.org
www.htmlhelp.com
www.webreference.com
www.webmonkey.com
www.webcoder.com
www.builder.com
www.dhtmlzone.com
jovoscriptsource.com
www.ncso.uiuc.edu/General/
Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimer.html

DESIGN TIPS

www.killersites.com
www.highfive.com
www.ruku.com
info.med.yale.edu/caim/manuol/
www.émigré.com
www.fishnet.net/~gini/cool/
www.desktoppublishing.com
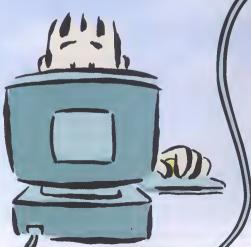
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terms and conditions.

Bcc :

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Larger ⬍   **B** | *I* | U | T |

Philip, I've left you. I've be
thought you might have no
somewhere else. I'm at mo

Jane.

HERE'S LOOKING FOR YOU, KID

With little in the way of email directory services, sometimes the only way to get someones email address is to ring and ask them. Bill Bennet looks at the options.

There are a million ways to find people through the Internet and it seems nowadays every new portal site has a people-finder option. Some Internet search engines allow you to

hunt for people's names and in many countries the White Pages can be accessed electronically. To cap it all, a number of popular desktop applications have recently added "people finding" tools. In fact, both the Windows and Macintosh operating systems now have built-in people finders – though as we shall see, these work in remarkably different ways.

You don't need to spend much time looking for people online to realise that huge numbers of people share the same name. This is particularly true for common Anglo-Irish Christian names and surnames, though it also applies to others. The reality is that the majority of online users are still in the English-speaking world and a lot of people in those countries have common ancestors. For example, on one people finder, a search for my name found more than 300 entries.

Another problem is that peoples' names are not as straightforward as you might imagine. Mr John Smith might be listed as J. Smith, Johnny Smith, Jonathon Smith or Jon Smith. He may or may not have a middle name or initial. Many of the search tools recognise this and are smart enough to work out likely variations – but software isn't fool-proof. An American search engine is unlikely to know that an Australian christened Jonathon might be known to the world as Jonno?

Short and simple

Another example is closer to home. Most people know me as Bill Bennett – but Bill is a contraction of William. It's not an unusual practice to use a shortened version, but the move from William to Bill changes the first letter. While many Anglo-

Irish people know this, it confuses others enormously. Few computers are able to recognise that the two names are the same.

One of the more frustrating aspects of searching for people online is that many of the search services are US-based. You can quite easily waste a lot of time hunting for an Australian, New Zealander or European only to discover that the search tool doesn't include people from these countries. In practice, people from outside North America are generally under-represented in online search databases. This actually represents a step backwards. In the early on-line era, most people finder tools were global.

Another factor limiting online people searching is that some people don't want their details made public, so you can't always be sure you've found the right person. Many of the search tools allow you to narrow your search by specifying a city or state (though some only allow you to select US states). This can help, but for it to work, the person being searched for has to have told someone where he or she is located.

Perhaps the biggest problem with online people searching is that databases are often seriously outdated. It's 18 months since I had a Compuserve account, but when I searched for my name while researching this story, a number of the tools found it. I also frequently came across a company account that was closed more than two years ago. Most incredibly, Yahoo People Finder unearthed an account that I closed six years ago! It appears that, unlike search engines, people search tools rarely go back to check that addresses remain valid.

All on one hand

Although it seems like there are many ways to search for people online, in reality, there are only a handful of search tools. They are cut and diced in many different ways. Consequently the various applications, portals and operating systems offering people search features recycle the same tools and get the same results. Many directories use a technology called LDAP (lightweight directory access protocol) which allows you to search them from within other applications.

On the Windows 98 start bar (either click the start button or press ctrl-esc) is a find feature. One of the options allows you to find people. Like all online search tools, you need to be connected to the Internet for this to work; however this isn't obvious from the software.

The program can search your computer's address book as well as a number of online services — the version on my machine shows seven search sites. You either search directly from within the application or click through to the search tool's Web site. When you find an address you can post it into your address book. An advanced search tool allows slightly more complex searching. In my test, the software failed to find my current address. Only three out of seven services could be accessed.

The Windows98 Find software is used by all other Microsoft applications and other programs, such as the Lotus personal organiser and the Eudora mail client.

Test driven
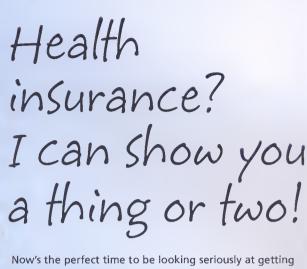
I searched for my name, an Australian colleague's name and my brother (who lives in the UK). The results were not impressive. Only one people search product found a current email address for any of the three. Many of the integrated search tools failed to connect with their respective databases. When they did connect, in every single case they either turned up nothing or only found out of date email addresses. This lack of functionality effectively renders the integrated LDAP tools useless.

The Web-based people search tools, which on the whole use the same databases, were equally unsuc-

FINDING PEOPLE

HERE'S A RUN DOWN OF THE MRIN SERVICES LIKELY TO INTEREST RUSTRRLIRNS.

ANYWHO www.onywho.com
US focused search tool from AT&T

BIGFOOT www.bigfoot.com
Anather person search bosed in the US.
Results improve the more information you give, such os locotion ond full nomes.

FOUR11 www.four11.com
An eorly fovourite, now knawn os
Yohoo! People Seorch

INFOSPRCE www.infospoce.com
Comes in two flovours – o business directory ond on Internet directory. The business directory is globol in scope, but badly out of dote.

SOUTHERN CROSS www.southerncross.aust.com
Austrolion people finder originoting from Ozemoil. Only hos nomes of people who hove registered with the service.

SWITCHBORRD www.switchboard.cam
US focused seorch tool far emoil, persans or business.

ULTIMATE PEOPLE FINDER www.seorch3.knowx.com
A fee bosed US oriented seorch engine. It cloims to be able to trock lost lovers, missing fomily members ond debt owing deodbeots.

WHOWHERE www.whowhere.cam
Port of the Lycos group this seorcher is internotionol in its scope. It gives pretty good results.

YAHOO! PEOPLE SEARCH people.yohoo.com
Seorches Yohoo! Members ond outside using 1800USSeorch.com.

cessful when looking for email addresses. However I could quickly find phone numbers using the Telstra White Pages (**www.whitepages.com.au**).

To be fair, some services, for example the locally operated Southern Cross, require people to register before their details are listed. But there's no incentive to do so. In fact, there's a clear disincentive. The more places you register your email address, the more likely you to be on the wrong end of spam mail.

It seems that most people finder services are designed mainly for US-based users. In fact, they are often designed only to find people in the US. This might makes them useful tools for finding people in America, but on the whole they are not very useful for locating fellow Australians and New Zealanders. Obviously, there's a gap in the market here just waiting to be filled.

While the people search tools fared badly, the conventional search engines did much better. Anzwers (**www.anzwers.com**) and Hotbot (**www.hotbot.com**), which share the same technology, performed best of all. This is because they have an option that allows you to search specifically for a person's name. I found all the people I was looking for using these engines. You can try using other search engines (see sidebar) and enclosing the person's name in quote marks.

Other approaches which sometimes work include going to the person's employer's Web site and searching there (or finding some addresses and figuring out how people's names translate into email addresses). If you know a person uses Usenet, you can search Deja News (**www.dejanews.com**) for their name. Otherwise, the best way to find an Australian's email address is to find their phone number (using White Pages) and then ring them and ask for their email address. ●

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EPmodel 645a
Pentium III 45a Mhz
17" Monitar
56K external modem
Win 95
64 Mb RAM
10 Gb Hard Disk
32 CD-ROM
3.5" Floppy

>> Hewlett Packard
Scanjet 32aac
scanner
>> Adabe Internet Pack
sofware including
Phata Deluxe, image
Ready, Image Styler
& Page Mill
>> Kadak Inkjet
Media Pack

>> Kadak DC 215 digital
camera
>> Kadak CD-R/RW
CD writer
>> Iamega Clik
partable storage unit
>> Hewlett Packard
Deskjet 810c printer

ACCESS	Do you connect first time?	RARELY ○○○○○ ALWAYS	
SERVICE	Help-desk support/response time is. .	POOR ●●●●● EXCELLENT	
EXTRAS	Range of extras offered? (eg, 56K / ISDN access, Web hosting, domain registration)	POOR ●●●●● EXCELLENT	
PRICE	Do you feel your ISP offers value for money	POOR ○●●●● EXCELLENT	

WIN

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EPmac
Pentium III
17"
56K external

64
10 Gb H
32
3.5"

KODAK DC215

IOMEGA CLIK

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Inkjet Photo Greeting Card Paper

KODAK CD-R

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Adobe Internet Pack

HP DESKJET

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▶ NETGUIDE INTERNET AWARDS 2000

We seek nominations from readers, designers and developers and of course, com-
panies who wish to boast about their Web site in the categories listed below. And
to sweeten the deal, we're giving NetGuide subscribers the chance to win an ulti-
mate Imaging System by rating their ISP on our Web site.

HOW TO NOMINATE A SITE

To make a
nomination in any
category point
your browser to
www.netguide
.com.au/awards/
and follow the
instructions on the
page. NetGuide
subscribers voting
for their ISP will go
in the draw to win
the Imaging System,
valued at $6,500
(see details on
page 58-59).
Nominations close
31 October 1999.

READERS CHOICE BEST ISP This award will recognise the
country's best ISP based on submissions by NetGuide
readers. Subscribers are asked to rate their ISP on
price, access, support and extras.

BEST PERSONAL HOME PAGE The Internet is all about
home users sharing their interests over the
Internet. Wanna-be Web designers, this is your
award. We're looking for home enthusiasts who have
created their very own sexy, inventive and content-
packed home on the Web.

BEST EDUCATION SITE The Internet is infiltrating our
schools and more and more teachers and students
are using it as an information source, and for
communication with schools around the world. This
award honours a site that is teaching our children or
our teachers in a new way.

BEST COMMERCIAL / ETAIL SITE This award recognizes
Australian companies using the Web to promote their
business or as an extra retail arm. We're looking for
sites that embody all the vitals of good business —
ease of use and navigation, security, service and
support.

BEST INFORMATION SITE There's no denying it —
content is king and is the force to carry the Web into
the new Millenium. We're looking for sites jam packed
with information. Any topic, any sector. What's
important is that these sites carry the spirit of
information sharing.
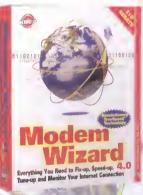
NETGUIDE SITE OF THE YEAR The most outstanding site
of the categories above will bask in the glory of
being the NetGuide Site of the Year. It must be
local, have great design, be full of original ideas
and have the quintessential Australian flavour.

NEW TO THE NET>>
CACHING FOR A RAINY DAY

Martin Davies examines
the options for fine-tuning
your Internet browser.

YOUR BROWSER HAS SOME tricks up its sleeve to make your Internet experience seem faster.

Your Cache or Temporary Files Folder is an important but occasionally painful part of your Web browser. Don't look embarrassed, everyone has one, they just tend to be hidden away — nested five folders deep somewhere in the heart of your hard drive.

This folder is where your browser stores files from every page you visit while you surf the Net. Every time you make go to a page those graphics, java and text files are actually downloaded to your hard drive and stored in cache. Your browser assumes if you go to a Web site once, chances are you'll go there again in the not too distant future. This is a really useful feature when you do go back to the same pages often and can save a lot of downloading time, especially for sites with lots of static images.

Both Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer let you change the way your computer cache's files from the pages you download. They also let you manually clear your cache if you decide the whole the whole thing is getting out of control.

Temporary viewing

In Microsoft's Internet Explorer your cache is called your Temporary Internet Files. To change your Temporary Internet File settings, click **Tools** on the menu bar and select **Internet Options**. The opening window has a section called Temporary Internet Files. If you just want to clear the files click the **Delete Files** button and listen to your hard drive groan in pain – this file can get fairly large.

If you want to actually change your Temporary Internet File settings, click the **Settings** button.

You will notice the first option in this window lets you choose when Explorer uses the files it has stored in its cache and when it loads the files all over again. You can get it to check for new versions of stored pages every time you visit the page, or never, which means the browser will use your Temporary Internet Files until they are de-

leted. It pays to choose a setting somewhere in between these two options.

The rest of the options on this window are about managing your Tempoary Files Folder. To change where your temporary internet files are stored click the **Move Folder button** and select (or create) a new folder.

To change the amount of hard drive space used by your Temporary Internet files you adjust the **Amount of disk space to use** option. You can do this either by moving the slide button or by entering the amount of space to use as a number in megabytes.

Sometimes you might want to actually view the individual files which are stored in your temporary folder. You can do this by clicking the **View Files** button. The **View Objects** button also lets you look at any applications such as Plugins and cookies stored on your machine.

Navigator with a difference

Your cache options in Netscape Navigator work pretty much the same way. To access your cache options in the Netscape Communicator 4.51 and 4.6 release click the **Edit** button on your menu bar and select **Preferences**. This displays the Communicator Preferences window. Your cache options are stored under the **Advanced** Folder. Click the **Advanced** folder and then **Cache** to display the Cache window as below.

Communicator lets you control both a cache on your hard drive and a Memory Cache which is just stored in your computer's RAM. Your Memory Cache is obviously cleared when you shut down Communicator. Your Disk Cache is stored on your hard drive.

Both of the Caches in Communicator work on a set amount of memory. If you set either Cache to 1024 Kbytes (1 meg), for example, it will start to replace older files with newer ones when it fills up 1Mb of RAM or hard drive space. Both caches can also be cleared manually by clicking the **Clear Memory Cache** or **Clear Disk Cache** buttons.

Just as with Explorer you can change the location of your cache folder. In Communicator you do this by clicking the **Change Folder** button. Choosing when Communicator uses cached files and when it downloads them again is also the same as with Explorer except that you do not have the **Automatic** option.

Generally you will find that effective caching will save you time and even money. Many Internet accounts which work on set monthly hours also have a download limit. What they don't explain is that this limit includes the automatic downloads which happen every time you hit a new page. Using your browser cache well can help to alleviate this.

So play around with your cache setting until you find something that best suits your browsing habits and disk space. ●

begone**drabness**

James Baker shows how with a little love
you can sharpen the look of a site

MAKING A WEB SITE come alive is relatively simple, and it only takes a few basic tags to get more colour and life into your pages.

The first thing we want to do is get rid of the grey background. So far, our page has been written using the default colour of the Web, which in reality is the default colour of the browser.

We don't have to suffer this drabness, however. First up, we need to get something in the background for our text and images to sit on. There are two main ways of doing this. The first is to use a background colour, the second to use a background image.

Setting the background colour is a function of the body tag, which describes the characteristics of the page. Instead of grey, we'll make the page white to give a clean uncluttered look. To do this we add the qualifier bgcolor="#FFFFFF" to the tag. Where the "body" tag is, we now want to have:

```
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">
```

The FFFFFF is the hexadecimal value of the Red, Green and Blue values of white. We'll go into using colour on the Web at a later date,

An alternative to altering the browser's background colour is to add a background image. Background images are automatically tiled to cover the available screen space, which means that to cover your page with an image, you don't have to have a huge file which covers the entire page, but just one small image which will repeat itself.

I've created a small image called squiggle.gif, a (badly) drawn line with a file size of just 635 bytes. To make it display on the page, we simply add the qualifier background="squiggle.gif" after the bgcolor qualifier in the "body" tag:

```
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF"
background="squiggle.gif">
```

A similar trick can be achieved by using a vertically-shaped image, giving a vertical striped effect, although the readability of what's on the page could be seriously impaired by this. A better effect is to use make an image which is only a few pixels high, but 1280 pixels wide. When tiled, this image will repeat every few pixels down the page, but will only repeat every 1280 pixels across the screen. The effect is therefore a single vertical image that can act as a border to your page, especially if the design is placed to one side and the rest of the 1280 pixels are left as a solid colour.

Using the effect we described above to make a horizontal line across the page, you'll see the first line of text is almost the same colour as the image we've used. Using the body tag again, it is possible to set up the page to use a different font colour from the default black.

So it stands out against the blue part of the background image, I've set the text of the page to a garish red using the qualifier text="#FF0000". The default hyperlink colour can also be changed by setting the value link="#336666", making links to other pages a grey-green colour.

Finally, the colour of visited links can be set using the vlink qualifier. This means that when links from a page have been followed, the next time you go to the referring page, the link will

have changed colour to indicate it has been visited. The "body" tag should now look like this:

```
<body text="#ff0000" bgcolor="#ffffff"
link="#336666" vlink="#ffff00"
background="squiggle.down.gif">
```

The final tweak we want to do to enhance the basic look of our page is to set a font for our text. This part of the HTML specification will not work with all browsers, but will work on later versions of Navigator and Internet Explorer.

Unless you specify otherwise, the browser will render text in the browser's default font, usually a variation of Times Roman. However, you can chose to override this using the "font face" tag. When a browser finds this, it will use the font specified instead of the default. The HTML for our

test page should now look something like this:

```
<html>
<bodt text="#FF0000" bgcolor="#FFFFFF"
link="#336666" vlink="#FFFF00"
background="squiggle.down.gif">
<font face="futura,helvetica,arial">
<p>goodbye cruel world.
<p><a href="stories/story.html">here's my
story</a>
<img src="books.gif" alt="link to stories"
width=100 height=106 border=0 align=bottom>
</font>
</body>
</html>
```

Without adding much in the way of new tags, we've changed the look of the page, adding colour to the text and links, setting a font, and giving background images and colours. Next month we'll start to add some shape to the colours. ⬤

NETTRENDS

Email not getting through to business

A survey conducted by Australian Business Advisers (**www.abaconsulting.com.au/emailsurveyart.htm**) on the responsiveness of Australian businesses to email in April this year has found many companies failed to make contact after being sent the email question – "what is your corporate address?".

According to ABA the speed at which responses are received provides an insight into the emphasis is being given to online customer service by corporate Australia. The survey found that while 80% of Australia's top 100 companies (by market capitalisation) have a Web site, 9% of companies with a Web site could not be contacted by email from their site or made it so difficult that most visitors would be unable to make email contact. So, a total of 27% of Australia's largest companies could not be contacted by email.

This result is similar to a survey in the US of Fortune 100 Web sites conducted by Brightware (**www.brightware.com**), which found that 26% of the 100 largest companies in the US could not be contacted by email from their Web site.

Another survey by Cognitiatives (**www.cognitiatives.com**) on customer service expectations found that customers prefer responses to their email questions within a few hours, but response times of one day are acceptable. The Australian Business Advisers survey found that 49 companies (61% of companies with a Web site) responded within one day. Interestingly, whilst 34% of companies with a Web site responded within 3 hours, only 15% of US Fortune 100 companies responded within three hours of an identical question in Brightware's survey.

But more Australian companies did not respond to the email at all. 14% of companies with Web sites did not respond within four weeks, as compared to 10% of US Fortune 100 companies. However, the Australian results are much better than a survey of 325 British Web sites conducted by Buchanan E-Mail Limited (**www.buchanan.co.uk**), which found 38% of Web sites did not respond to an email query. ▪

NETCOOL

* **www.netguide.au.com/forums/** >> have your say on the new, shiny NetGuide Web site. Go on!
* **Banana bonanza** >> The pride of the Australian Banana Industry, just for the little ones (www.bananaland.com.au)
* **Gooey gasbagging** >> Meet me at www.netguide.com.au at midnight (www.hypernix.com)
* **List power** >> Coordinate your friendships with a personalised mailing list (www.listbot.com or www.list.to)
* **True Blue, mate** >> Did the dingo eat your baby? Not this one! (www.dingoblue.com.au)
* **The curse of JFK** >> Time magazines study of the Kennedy family (cgi.pathfinder.com/time/magazine/articles/0,3266,26453,00.html)

NEWSWATCH

What's been happening? **Daniel Fallon** keeps you on top
of the issues, and sites on the Web that will tell you more.

>the JFK curse

JFK Junior moves on
fk-junior.net

One of the great political families of modern times
has been struck down with tragedy again. The death
of JFK Junior, the only surviving son of assassinated
US president John F Kennedy, and his wife Carolyn
Bessette and wife's sister Lauren has created a world
media storm. The three perished when their plane,
piloted by JFK Junior, crashed off the coast of the US
on route to Martha's Vineyard, where they were to
attend a wedding. The prominent public figure had
in recent times created and edited political maga-
zine *George*.

At this site you can catch up on headlines related
to the tragedy and even vote on whether you think it
was an accident – the clear majority believe it was.

Badgery's creek airport

The stormy issue of where Sydney's next airport
should be built has blown up again following a re-
cent report that says Badgery's Creek in Sydney's west
passes in terms of the environmental impact of the
proposal **(www.dotrs.gov.au/airports/eis/).** This is a
summary of that report. While as many as 20 differ-
ent sites have been examined as possible alternatives
for a second domestic and international airport,
Badgery's Creek seems to be the preferred spot.

An estimated $1.4 billion to $2.4 billion figure has
been given to building an airport capable of handling
10 million passengers per year, and a further $600
million could be spent to build off-site infrastructure
such as roads and rail. But they may decide to build

one bigger and more costly. You can find out more
about the government's SWAT (Sydney West Airport
Taskforce), which is the body that advises the
government on where the second airport
should be built, at **www.dot.gov.au/airports/**.

Swiss canyoning accident
www.adventureworld.ch

One of the worst overseas tragedies involving young
Australians. 13 Australians perished and many adven-
turers were injured when a flash flood ripped
through a canyon near Interlaken in Switzerland on
a canyoning expedition run by Adventure World. The
company runs numerous activities, including river
rafting, bungy jumping, mountain biking, rock climb-
ing and skydiving. Canyoning involves abseiling or
climbing down into a canyon and then jumping into
pools and swimming down the river, which runs
down the middle of the canyon.

Anderson new deputy PM

Australia has a new deputy prime minister. John
Anderson, Minister for Transport, fills the hat of de-
parting veteran Tim Fischer as leader of the National
Party and joint head of the coalition. Find out more
about Anderson from his departmental Web site at
www.dotrs.gov.au or from the National Party site
(www.ozemail.com.au/~npafed/), which has policies,
speeches and state links. Fischer is one of the most
well liked and respected politicians across both sides
of parliament and has relinquished his leader in or-
der to be closer to his family. ●

ecoRECYCLE

Recycling Information service

- Recycling services
- Materials
- Statistics
- Recycled products
- waste exchange
- Processes & Technologies
- Publications & Regulations
- Household recycling
- ???
- Glossary
- Feedback
- ecoRECYCLE

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TOP 50

Paid to surf >> Daniel Fallon, Jason Jacobs & the NetGuide team

WeddingChannel.com

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INDUSTRY

Life and Death of the Factory

www.ee.j.com/bamberger/

Since the first calculator was invented we've seen computers and machinery replacing many manual skills. In 1950 half the American workforce was employed in the manufacturing sector of the economy. In 1990 manufacturing only employed 20% of Americans, while service jobs increased to 70% of all American employment over the same period. US photographer Bill Bamberger documented the White Furniture Company of Mebane, North Carolina as it closed its doors after more than 100 years of business and his photos form part of an American History exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Museum.

Robots
www.ljkamm.com/robots.htm

This guy knows what's talking about when it comes to robots – make sure you're wearing sunglasses when you visit his site. Lawrence, the author, is a practising electro-mechanical and mechanical engineering consultant. He says people dislike doing most work and find a variety of ways to avoid it. Some simply shirk, others engineer machines to do it for them. Among the facts; a Czech playwright, Karel Capek, coined the word "robot" in the early 1920's. In his play a scientist invents artificial people, robots, lacking only souls, to do the world's work. The robots rebel, but the good guys win.

↑ Spacesaver
www.spacesaver.com

Nothing seems to cause more frustration in factories or offices than clutter and not being able to locate things easily. This US crowd has installed more than 50,000 space saving systems. You might get some tidy ideas from "the leading North American manufacturer of high density mobile storage systems for office, institutional and industrial applications", otherwise known as big fancy cupboard builders.

The Great Exhibition

www.nal.vam.ac.uk/projects/1851.html

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations was held in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London in 1851. It was the first international exhibition of manufactured products and was enormously influential on the development of many aspects of society including art and design education, international trade and relations, and even tourism. The Exhibition also set the precedent for the many international exhibitions, which followed during the next 100 years. See also **www.stg.brown.edu/ projects/hypertext/landow/victorian/1851/ 1851ov.html** .

Global March against child labour

www.globalmarch.org

Protests against child labour practise in third world countries are growing and led to this protest march in many countries. Said the organiser: "We are now experiencing an era of economic globalisation, which creates the illusion of a global village, but when children come together, without a common language, joined by their suffering as labourers, this is a true global village." An inquiry into child labour in India is documented at **www.geocities.com/ CollegePark/Library/9175/inquiry1.htm**

Industrial design

www.tulane.edu/lester/text/1890-Present/ Modern/Modern.html

Gaze at some of the industrial design changes over the last 100 years. Here you'll find a 1910 shoe factory where the walls were almost entirely glass, a 1961 university medical lab which "abandons design

based on simplification and polished brittleness", and a small motors factory in Berlin built in 1910. "One of the great early industrial buildings, it is powerful in its simple use of rugged materials and in the dignity of its proportions".

↑ The Industrial Revolution

members.aol.com/mhirotsu/kevin/trip2.html

If it wasn't for the industrial revolution you probably wouldn't be reading this. If you were, we would have had to put the whole magazine together by hand. In the words of Toyota 4WDs, which are much more efficient on the farm than horses and buggies – bugger that! This site tells how the industrial revolution affected modern life. There are also some transcripts of lectures about the Industrial revolution in the UK at **socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ ugcm/3ll3/toynbee/indrev**, or for an American slant on the Industrial Revolution check out **tqjunior. advanced.org/4132/**, which includes fun stuff, like child labour laws, for kids.

HOT DRINKS

Oz Coffee

www.ozcoffee.com.au

For Australian 'Coffee-holics' – we have your Nirvana. This site is specially designed for serious caffeine Net heads, this site caters to the most demanding tastes. You can order the special brew "Downloaders' Dripolator" or a "Hyper Cyber Slider". If you can't make up your mind you can order a combination – the "Beta Tester's Trial Pack". There are recipes as well as some tips on being a coffee connoisseur. Secure online ordering is available for rare coffees from Australia and Laos. Don't miss our all-time favourite – **www.toomuchcoffeeman.com**.

The Virtual Bar

www.thevirtualbar.com

So you come home from work and want to relax by having a nice hot drink. Let us take it a step further – how about entering a virtual bar from the comfort of your own home. Want to put some music on the jukebox? No problem, there's a huge selection of MIDI files to listen to as you browse through the various drink recipes. You'll also find some bar tending tips, drinking games, questions about toasts and toasting, information on glasses. Most importantly, they have information on what to do the morning after one too many not-so-hot drinks.

↑ Milo

www.milo.com.au

Developed in Australia and exported around the world, Milo has provided Aussies with a warm nightcap for over 50 years. The Macromedia Shockwave introduction caught me completely by surprise and had me reaching for the volume control in my normally quiet office. The people at Nestle have extended themselves ever so slightly to include such features as a team strategy game to play online. By

the way, did you know that Milo is derived from the ancient Greek athlete Milon who was renowned for his feats of strength? Says so here.

The Coffee Lovers Information Source
www.coffee.com.au

While not being as slick as the OzCoffee site, there's still a lot of good information regarding the humble coffee bean. If you have a coffee question, ask these guys. If you thought buying an Espresso machine was going to be easy, think again. Did you know that the machine has to be tuned to the cup size? I don't think I have heard of an Espresso Tuner before. There is the promise of online ordering of the coffee beans within 24 hours of actual roasting. I wonder if they deliver hot, one sugar.

Aroma's Tea and Coffee Merchants
www.aromas.com.au

There are several good coffee sites on the Web, but if you are a tea drinker, help is at hand. Aroma's is again marketing orientated but this does not prevent it from being informative. Take the interesting spiel on the infamous Boston Tea party for instance. There is also a section on what constitutes a perfect cuppa. Be it the perfect cup of tea or coffee, there are sections on both

Diwwy in-car drinks dispenser
www.diwwy.co.uk

If you thought you had all the available car accessories, what about this little beauty. What better way to impress that special someone than to go for a dinner, wine and dine them, and then pull up at a romantic moonlit beach. The stereo is playing soft music and to top it all off – serve them a cappuccino from your glove box. This little unit is can be bought online and has all the essential trappings of yuppiedom, fresh hot drinks of your choice, all available from the comfort of your car.

Campbell's Soup
www.campbellsoup.com

Immortalised by Andy Warhol, Campbell's Soup is an international institution. Being based in the US, the online ordering is somewhat meaningless, and it was down when I tried to access it anyway. Instead you'll find good recipes as well as the usual financial reports, community involvement programmes and a fun and games section. The funny thing is that this games section is called "play with your food". I see a lounge-room wall mural combining tomato and chicken noodle.

RECYCLING

Recycle 2000
www.recycle2000.com.au

The noble mission driving this South Australian government body is "to eliminate the need for putting waste to landfill". The site links resources and services primarily in South Australia to various recycling initiatives. More relevant to surfers are the fact sheets. These sheets describe different types of materials and the means of recycling them. Such items as building materials, plastic, glass and waste oil are all covered. There are also some official reports available for download, one in particular by the CSIRO covering water control is interesting.

Steel Can Recycling Page
www.steelcans.com.au

Have you ever been a closet aluminium can collector? Planet Ark, not content with managing one Web site, also hosts this one, which covers the National Steel Can Recycling campaign. Although Australians currently recycle over 36,530 tonnes of steel cans every year, this represents a recycling rate of 30%. The other 70% of cans are needlessly ending up in landfill. This Web site provides pointers to councils who recycle cans and items that cannot be recycled. Links are also provided to Australian and international sites. There are listings of media campaigns as well as a section on the can recycling process.

↑ Planet Ark
www.planetark.org

Since its inception in 1991 Planet Ark has grown to be one of the most visible promoters of waste reduction and recycling the world over. It's a very professional offering full of great information. There's a daily newsletter and you can also get access to the Reuter's news feed and pictures on environmental news. Visitors can access archived audio broadcasts from the ABC and

from Planet Arks' own studios that cover interviews and stories on happenings around the world.

SCRAP

www.nccnsw.org.au/member/scrap/

School Communities Recycling All Paper (SCRAP) is the Web presence of an Australian public company. It aims to recycle the massive amounts of paper products that go through our educational bodies. Looking back on my school and university days I remember the huge amounts of paper left over in the photocopy rooms and the like. SCRAP is the body originated by three teachers to provide an avenue to address this problem. The site has sections on joining SCRAP, a calendar of its activities and links to projects that they are currently in.

The 'Bag It' Project

www.geocities.com/RainForest/Andes/4107/

Plastic bags seem to be one of the most visible forms of litter in the 90s. You don't have to go far to see people grab a handful of bags on each visit to the supermarket. Where do all the bags end up and what effect does it have on the environment? If you can get over the annoying Geocities pop-ups, 'Bag It' is an excellent site. Its mission is to reduce the amount of wastage associated with plastic bags. Sections are devoted to facts about the amount of waste and why the bags are a hazard. Solutions are also offered to see how you can do your own bit to help out.

Vermiculture

www.moreinfo.com.au/hippo/
vermicl.html#top

Yuck, this site has those slimy, wet and mouldy creatures – worms. The humble earth worm, for so long has been the friend of fishermen the world over is now is being viewed as a powerful force in the area of re-cycling. Vermiculture is the use of worms to tackle the problem of the decreasing availability of landfill. This page is primarily a links page for finding out more information on the subtle art of Vermiculture. Check out 'Rot Web" and the 'Composter's Forum'. I'm sure you'll look at worms in a new light after seeing their recycling capabilities.

↑ EcoRecycle

www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au

A government initiative for Victoria, EcoRecycle is another information mechanism for various recycling drives and programmes. Here you'll find a top information source covering such topics as household recycling, recycling services as well as processes and technology. The information is well presented and is detailed on a per product basis. Batteries, concrete, office equipment and plastics all get referenced. A glossary is included for those un-decipherable recycling and chemical acronyms. Statistics are also present that show what and how much materials were recycled in Victoria over the last five years.

CAVING

Virtual Cave
www.goodearth.com.
vrtcave.htm

An impressive site if just for the depth of information. On entry you have the option of a tour of a generic cave and thus have the ability to choose to look at various cave formations and phenomenon. By the end some of the tour terms such as stalagmite and stalactite start to make some sense. Professional layout and navigation mean visitors can have an educational experience. Do you know that you can find 'moon milk' inside a cave? If you don't believe me, have a look inside the Virtual Cave.

Western Australian Speleology
wasg.iinet.net.au

This is a must have site for those people who are caving in Australia. If you need access to mailing lists, or other caving organisations within the country (or the world for that matter) this is the site to make as your base. It's won't ever be know for it's style, but there's a wealth of local information here. Also check out the Sydney-based Highland Caving Group at **www.hcg.org.au**.

↑ The Cave Page
www.cavepage.magna.com.au/cave/

Having next to no experience in caving, where do you go? Well for starters, the scientific name for caving is Speleology. The next step would be the Cave Page. Visitors can use the discussion group forum to chat about their caving experiences and there are several trip reports of expeditions as well as section called "odds and sods", which gives tips on how to prepare for your own caving experiences. Lets Go Caving!

The caves east of the Mbinga Hills

↑ Virtual Caving

rses.anu.edu.au/~georg/
caving/caving.html

Designed for those who want the adrenalin rush of caving but just can't find the energy to move from the couch. This is one person's attempt to give the "feeble folk" a chance to see some of the great underground sights. There is coverage of field trips to Turkey as well as Thailand. Madagascar and Tanzania also get a mention. Effort has gone in to giving the geology as well as the outline of the caves. This is great and gets away from the feeling that you're going through a collection of someone's holiday photos.

Speleo Link Page
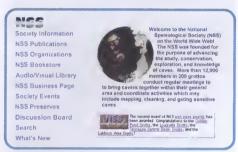
hum.amu.edu.pl/~sgp/spec/links.html

Need caving links – this is where it's at. In fact, this site has over 820 of them and they're still counting. This page is a real treasure trove and you can spend an inordinate amount of time trawling through the various links. Some of them may be old, out of date, or totally irrelevant. However if you wanted a single resource you couldn't do

much worse than adding Speleo to your favourite links for caving.

Cave Diving

www.cavediving.com

It's not for everyone, and no wonder. Imagine immersing yourself in freezing cold water, turning out all the lights & swimming in very confined spaces. This is a great information site if you have the balls to attempt this sport. The only requirements – a big oxygen tank and an even bigger torch.

↑ The National Speleogical Society

www.caves.org/defaultjs.htm

This is the professional Web presence of the US based National Speleogical Society. Although it reads like a hardcopy manual, you'll find information on caving books and videos you can purchase as well as upcoming events. Upon delving deeper it was noted that the purpose of this site is not intended to promote one cave over another. Still, a useful site to visit if you are considering going caving in the US. The Australian Speleogical Society is at **rubens.its.unimelb.edu.au/~pgm/asf/** and the New Zealand Speleogical Society is at **www. massey.ac.nz/~SGlasgow/nzss/welcome.htm**

4 WHEEL DRIVES

Off road
www.off-road.com/toc/

Here are some wild toys. Check out the desert racer – the Foutz Motorsports F-250 Super Duty –, which is one very serious piece of hardware. Or the 1999 Sniper created by Steve Rumore. He builds kits for coil springs, quarter elliptical suspensions, and other trick goodies for your high performance 4x4. He's working on a production vehicle to meet the needs of the person who "wants it all" in off-road performance. Hold on to your seat as you ride the Lothringer Class 10. Menacing in appearance, it possesses an outstanding power to weight ratio, and boasts copious amounts of wheel travel. Like that's needed in an M5 traffic jam.

Toyota Trails
www.tlca.org

If you're a Toyota driver, this is the meeting place. Most of the members drive land cruisers but they tolerate those with 4 runners and 4x4 trucks. The members take it all very seriously. There is a description of terms for the newbie so you can passionately discuss the merits of a Craftsman 1/2x16-inch screwdriver or how your much use you are getting out of your E-Z out bolt and stud extractor. Some helpful repair tips are given. Be sure to check out Outback Club at the official Toyota site at **www.toyota.com.au**.

More **POWER** with a Safari Turbo System

↑ Safari Turbo Systems
www.safari4x4.com.au

Here's the place to give your vehicle the supercharged boost that will mean others kilometres away will hear you coming. Safari Turbo Systems are available to suit most Japanese designed diesel engines built for 4WD/light commercial vehicles such as the Toyota Land cruiser. Feel the power.

All Terrain Safaris
www.allterrain.com.au

Want a little adventure, but too scared to get your mini's wheels dirty? It's time to go cross-country and get back in touch with the wild Aussie outback. This is a simple stop, but none the less an effective one

for organising a variety of off road tours in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The four-day trip travelling from Perth through Pinnacles desert and up to Monkey Mia – home of wild dolphins – sounds like a fun. You'll get the itinerary here.

↑ Big Red Tour
www.wilmertown.com/oz/

This Swede loved Australia so much, he wanted to explore its vast deserts. So he did a crash course in four wheel driving and bush camping and set off. Here he shares his story and snapshot album and gives lots of tips, including a list of everything he took with him. The biggest dangers? Forget the snakes, according to this adventurer the dangers are yourself, your vehicle, drunk drivers, road conditions, big stupid animals on the road, crocodiles, pigs – and lastly other nuisances like snakes.

4-Wheeling America
www.bb4wa.com

Bill Burke runs a training course and shares tips on racing about on dirt tracks. According to Bill there are times when the idiom "getyourdamfoot offdaclutch" doesn't apply, but there are times when

"go as slow as possible but as fast a necessary" is practical. He's a helpful soul and has some feedback from drivers who thank him for it. Don't feel bad if you end up upside down in a ditch, Bill tells of some of his early "bonehead" mistakes.

↑ Mud-ness
www.buffnet.net/~mudness/index1.htm

4WDs are often seen parked outside Sydney's inner city trendy cafes. You may wonder if the well-groomed drivers have ever ventured beyond such streets to capture the real thrills of off road driving. If you want to see real mud, check out these racers, which will need more than your average service station car wash after what they've been through. The page hasn't been updated for a while but the photos are still worth checking out.

GOON SHOW

Goonography
www.charkim.demon.co.uk

Ying tong iddle-I-po, it's the dreaded Goon Show on the Net. The show was played on the BBC between 1952 and 1960 and was popular in the colonies. It still pops up on the radio, usually at some ridiculous hour in the middle of the night. This Goonography is a fan's tribute to the genius of Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe and the others who created the 250 programmes. You can act out some of the shows here but you'll have to improvise the sound effects, pretend you are Max Geldray or Ray Ellington and put on a Wallace Greenslade tone to announce that "this is the BBC". May the fun never end?

Goons MP3 page
www.alphalink.com.au/~robertd/
GoonShowmp3.html
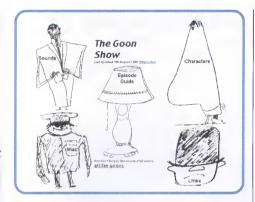
Goodness knows what the Goons would have made of MP3 let alone the Net. This Goon-starved fan is disappointed our local radio doesn't think the Goons cut it any more in 1999 that he's trying to make a show available each week. Downloading the file may turn out to be as big a mission as the Tale of Two Shirts or the Case of the Vanishing Room. We won't mention the word copyright.

↑ The Goon Show Preservation Society
www.thegoonshow.freeserve.co.uk

Its no secret Prince Charles is a huge fan of the Goons and has agreed to be the patron of this esteemed group. If you weren't of the Goon Show generation and need a quick introduction to the characters there's a guide here. Even that can take some deciphering for newbies. Eccles for example is described as "a voice combining Disney's Goofy character, Edgar Bergen's Mortimer Snerd, and Clifton Finnegan, the super-stupid regular customer at Duffy's Tavern". The US society is at **www.goon.org.**

Great Lollops of Sponge

www.apathy.demon.co.uk/goon/goon.htm

Goon Show fans seem to be forever making those noises. You know those noises. They can get very annoying if you don't fancy living forever with an Eccles-type person. This fan has captured some of them to drive everyone else within range bonkers. Like Ned's "whatwhatwhatwhat". Just try and stop your wired friends finding out how you can download the sound files permanently onto their machine. Don't forget the source of all lunacy, the Goon Show newsgroup **alt.fan.goons**.

Goon Appreciation Society Of Australia

www2.dynamite.com.au/eccles/cartoons.htm

There's always one, or a whole society of them. If you're looking for images that might help you visualise the craziness of the Goons as you listen to them, then you should probably pop along to this site. Here you'll find cartoons of all the featured characters in the various episodes, such as Neddie Seagoon in *The House of Teeth*. Just click on the images and you'll be

guided through the assortment of images – they're pretty good. Also find out about how to get involved with the Sydney and Melbourne Goon fan clubs.

Goon Links

minnie.cs.adfa.oz.au/Goons/

NetGuide reader Gary Clapcott pointed out this great page of links as a Web site address worthy of a Goon Show sound effect. The Information Super Goonway is another fantastic stop for fans. If your computer has a Bluebottle soundcard, you'll get to hear the show's theme in living black and white. There are also photos of the Goons at **www.goldenapplecomics.com/goonpix/**.

↑ The Goon Show Scripts

www.residents.com/Goons/

Evidence of the super wit of the Goons – who featured Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe – can be found in the shows scripts, which can be accessed here. You'll find everything from the early *The Booted Gorilla* (1954) through to *Wings over Dagenham*. There is little doubt there was a magical spontaneity when these nutty minds performed together. Just scroll down and you're bound to break into a laugh or two.

WEDDINGS

The Knot

www.theknot.com

Here you'll find lots of romance advice, from picking the best calendar date to the 10 hottest most passionate honeymoon places on the planet (How about the Balearic Islands?). One of the big worries is always the budget. That inevitable juggling so you can still fit in Aunty May without upsetting the other 100 Aunties who expect to be at the feast. Is your budget out of control? You can test it out here. Remember, it will be in American dollars. As with most of these wedding sites, it tries to push you towards buying something but being US based, is easy to resist.

Australian Dream Weddings

www.wildweddings.com/adw/ozcoup.html

Why do people go through such stress when they're getting married? Life can be so much easier – you'd think if you can organise a funeral in a few days you'd be able to get people together easily enough for a wedding. Well this site makes it easier. Here you can plan your dream Australian wedding and have someone else do all the hard work for you. It just takes a few clicks, a couple of deep breaths, a lot of money, and voila, you're booked. Start by filling out the form. Now do I want a beach wedding or a wedding with koalas present?

↑ Wedding channel

www.weddingchannel.com

There's nothing like looking at other weddings to get some ideas. It always helps to have a nosey at what other brides are wearing. There's an array of bridal gear on display here and a style guide on what the various definitions mean. A Sweetheart Neckline, for example, is a "graceful, open yoke shaped like the top half of a heart. One of the most popular bridal gown necklines." You can also share your secrets with the

world by doing a profile on where you met, and what you are doing for your wedding.

↑ The In-laws
www.inlawinfo.com

This sounds like a transcript from TV's *Jerry Springer* show. Advice is given to those becoming an in-law or couples having in-law problems. "My daughter and I are very angry and hurt at my son's fiancée. She never includes us in anything. I don't even know exactly when the wedding is. She is also inviting my ex-husband's new girlfriend. This girl and my daughter do not get along. They even got into a fist fight once," sobs one user. Hmm, riveting stuff – do they have video footage?

Matrimony Mambo
houston.webpoint.com/wedding/

This site hands out 11 commandments to make sure your day comes right. Number one is that it's your wedding. It's not your parents' or his parents' wedding and not a public occasion meant to live up to (or down to) others' standards. And another – set aside family conflicts on your wedding day. Your brother-in-law is a jerk? Can't stand your Aunt Thea? Give them a big hug and move on.

Two Become One
www.twobecomeone.com

Getting married on the Net is apparently a cool thing to do these days. Some host a wedding of sorts in a chat room and this means people who can't attend because they are in far flung places can feel part of it. You can even add in music. Here's an example of a online wedding archived so we can see all share Dale and Lorrie's happy moment. The famous Jerry Falwell officiated. Dale says Lorrie is the prettiest thing on the planet.

↑ Ungroom'd
www.ungroomed.com
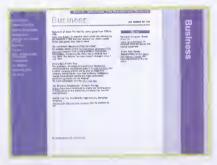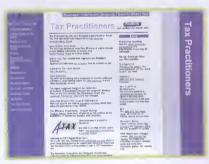
This site portrays marriage from the bloke's perspective. Thankfully no sign of photos from those dreadful stag parties here. The word commitment does keep coming up in articles guiding men along this important path. Articles also deal with what are thought to be some common male fears as wedding day nears – such as "what if she grows fat and ugly? What if your sex life gets boring or just disappears. And what about all those other beautiful women?" Our advice? Wait for the spaceship.

SITE OF THE MONTH

Individuals

Business

Tax Practitioners

Australian Taxation Office

http://www.ato.gov.au

Now that tax time is around again, this may not be the most exciting site on the Net, but it certainly can be one of the most useful.

Tax time comes every year and it's always painful. Nothing is going to make it fun or painless, but the Australian Taxation Office is doing its best to add a little spark to your tax return by way of this Web site. And to top it off, doing it online makes it a whole lot easier.

One of the most useful parts of the site is the e-tax software. This allows you to file your return electronically. It's a secure system that takes you through an on-screen interview and, based on your answers to the questions, automatically completes your income tax return. It's just like getting someone else to do all the hard work for you.

The on-screen interview, in-built calculations, work sheets, validation checks and 'Help' have been designed to make it easier for you to complete your return. It will provide you with an estimate of your refund or bill and, after downloading a secure component, you can lodge your return over the Net.

The site includes ATO locations, and information on paying tax for either individuals or businesses. By far the most handy feature is the online Tax Installment Calculator (TID), which helps you figure out how much tax your employers should be taking out. ■

FARFETCHED

Raewyn Whyte enjoys the happy
sunny vibe in Jamaica

> lively up yourself

SPENDING THREE WEEKS AT the beach sounds appealing at this time of year so let's head for Jamaica (**www.discoverjamaica.com**) during the off-peak month of August. There are endless kilometers of white sand beaches, a plentiful array of beach resorts (**www.jamaicaresorts.com**), inns, guest houses and

private villas to suit every budget, and myriad opportunities to supplement lazing around with sailing, snorkelling and skin diving (**www.resortdiver. com**), waterskiing and fishing.

The annual reggae and dancehall music festival, SumFest, runs from August 1st to 5th on the beach at Montego Bay (**www.montego-bay-jamaica.com/ sumfest/**), kicking off with an all night beach party. Top local and international artists include Beenie Man, Buju Banton, Beres Hammond and Bounty Killer, Lauryn Hill, Usher and Jiimy Cliff, and by closing night attendance will be close to 40,000 people.

Beach central in Jamaica, however, is the area around Negril (**www.negril jamaica.com**) where 11 kilometers miles of uninterrupted, uncommonly beautiful beach are the backdrop for a fun-in-the-sun lifestyle encouraged by luxury resort chains such as Sandals (**www.sandals.com**) and Superclubs (**www.super-clubs.com**) Clothing-optional environments and nude beaches are common at these "all-inclusive" resorts (**www.hedonistvacations.com**) where your single fee covers accommodation, services, gourmet dining, unlimited alcoholic beverages, and hedonistic entertainment and recreational activities.

If lazing on the beach and socialising over cocktails

isn't your idea of a holiday, the waters around Negril (**www.jamaica-irie.com/ negrilscuba center**) offer the best diving in Jamaica with shallow reefs, caverns, trenches and drop-offs just a few hundred yards off-shore. At Jamzen (**members.aol.com/jamzen/**) you can rent kayaks or float in a sea hammock, and at Treasure Beach you can watch sea turtles laying their eggs if the conditions are right.

More active pursuits include climbing Blue Mountain peak (**www.go-jam .com/page7.html**) and bamboo river rafting on the Rio Grande (**www.alejo .com/jam2.html**), waterfall climbing at Dunn's River Falls (**www.virtual jamaica.com/www/dunns.htm**),
spelunking with the bat colonies in the honeycomb of limestone caves and caverns under Cockpit Country (**www.caribbeansupersite.com/jamaica/cockpit.htm**), or horse trekking along exotic forest trails in the mountains (**www.jamaica-irie.com/hooves/**). ■

liveDiary

YOUR NUMBER ONE **NET TV GUIDE**

Australian Scheduled shows

Tues, 2.15pm: Conversation with Shane Mahony
(**abc.net.au/rural/conversation/**) `MP` `RP`
15 JULY, 8PM (AEST): Chat with Dugald McNaughtan
from Area 7. **www.chatcity.com.au**
22 JULY, 8PM (AEST): Chat with Greedy Smith from
Mental as Anything. **www.chatcity.com.au**
29 JULY, 8PM (AEST): Chat with Bob Downe.
www.chatcity.com.au `??`

International — scheduled shows

DAILY, 4AM: Financial Times Business Times
(**www. ft-television.com/today/audio/ftbt.htm**)
MON, 12PM to 2PM: The Single Connection
(**www. broadcast.com/lightsource/live/single/**).
TUE-FRI, 5PM: Comedy Central
(**www.comedy central.com/dailyshow/**)
SUN, 8AM: Boot Scoot'n Party'n Nights
(**www.broad cast.com/premrad/showsbootscoot/**)

Live Events

17 AUGUST, 8AM (AEST): Bill Charlap Trio.
www.bluenote.net `RP`
20 AUGUST, 8AM (AEST): Paquito D'Rivera and James
Carter. **www.bluenote.net** `RP`
21 AUGUST, 7.30PM (AEST): Sheryl Crow and Gillian
Welch. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
22 AUGUST, 8.30PM (AEST): Glastonbury 1999.
www.channelv.com.au `RP`

25 AUGUST, 8AM (AEST): Harlem Gospel Choir.
www.bluenote.net `RP`
27 AUGUST, 8.30PM (AEST): Stereophonics -- Live at
Cardiff Castle. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
28 AUGUST, 7.30PM (AEST): Sinead O'Connor and
World Party. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
29 AUGUST, 8.30PM (AEST): Boyzone Unauthorised,
plus Boyzone clips. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
30 AUGUST, 11.30AM (AEST): Reel Big Fish.
www.liveconcerts.com `RP`
3 SEPTEMBER, 8.30PM (AEST): Radiohead.
www.channelv.com.au `RP`
4 SEPTEMBER, 7.30PM (AEST): Suzanne Vega and
Richard Thompson. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
5 SEPTEMBER, 8.30PM (AEST): Mariah Carey.
www.channelv.com.au `RP`
10 SEPTEMBER, 8AM (AEST): Jazz players Elvin Jones
and Michael Brecker. **www.bluenote.net** `RP`
10 SEPTEMBER, 8.30PM (AEST): Red Hot Chili Peppers,
live in Stockholm. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
12 SEPTEMBER, 8.30PM (AEST): Jewel -- Live in
concert. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`
19 SEPTEMBER, 8.30PM (AEST): Alanis Morissette
special. **www.channelv.com.au** `RP`

Live on the Web
Check out the NetGuide Web site
everyday for new Live events online.
You'll find live listings at
www.netguide.au.com/live/

HOT MOVIE SITES

Wild Wild West
www.wildwildwest.net

Definitely not a traditional shoot-em-up western. This is a "science fiction with hip-hop savoir-faire -- all set against a western background." A 19th century inventor villain, Arliss Loveless, is plotting to assassinate the US president using a huge walking weapon transport vehicle called the Tarantula. The man in black, Will Smith, is the special government agent trying to track down Loveless..

Wing Commander
www.wcmovie.com

Just when we got used to the idea of computer game soundtracks, the hit computer game, Wing Commander (**www.wingcommander.com**), hits the big screen. It's earth year 2654 and the Confederation is engaged in a brutal war with the vicious, bloodthirsty alien race, the Kilrathi. The world will end unless Freddie Prinze Jr., Matthew Lillard and Saffron Burrows and their elite fighter squadron can stop them.

CONCERT PICK

Reel Big Fish
30th August - 11.30am
www.liveconcerts.com

Some record companies just don't get the Net, but Reel Big Fish's label, Mojo, are embracing it this month by audio-casting a live performance from the House of Blues, Chicago. The band hit the charts recently with their single "Sell Out", from their self-released album "Everything Sucks". These guys have their own hot little Web site at www.reelbigfish.com. Check out their concert over the Net.

RP RealPlayer		**??** Unknown	
LP Live Picture		**SW** Shockwave	
NS MS Netshow		**MP** Windows Media Player	

Holding a live online event?
Let us know well inadvance by emailing
live@netguide.aust.com

*ALL DATES AND TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

the real oil

Daniel Fallon found Midnight Oil's drummer, Rob Hirst chatting online.

Instead of taking a break after a hectic tour with Midnight Oil, Rob Hirst is back working on a favourite project of his, a rock group called The Ghostwriters (**www.ghostwriters.com.au**) he formed some time ago with old friend and former Hoodoo Gurus bass player Rick Grossman.

The music scene has changed scene the Oils first started pumping through tunes at surf clubs and pubs around the country. Nowadays the local pub scene has given way to cyberspace as the venue for new bands to make it big, with artists posting sites featuring downloadable MP3 files for punters worldwide to listen to. The recent Australian Music Web Site Awards (**www.onya. com.au**) gives credence to the maturity and growing importance of music Web sites, and the plethora of sounds available shows now more than ever, alternative ideas are being given a chance.

Midnight Oil's Sony based site, **www.sony music.com.au/artists/midnightoil/**, was nominated for an award, while its own official site (**www.midnightoil.com**) is being quietly revamped. Hirst himself has adapted well, without even worrying about technology.

Would you describe yourself as a Net savvy kind of guy?
No, I would prefer to go for a swim.

What has been the response to the Ghostwriters and Midnight Oil sites?
Pretty good, particularly the Midnight Oil site, because it's an international audience — from South America to Stockholm to London.

Do you have any plans to release Oil's songs on MP3?
No — when you talk to someone like Sony they are really loathed to do it.

How did you come about creating the Ghostwriters' Web site?
Fans made up the site. We just spoke to these folks that come up at shows. A lot of them work in areas where they could help us design a site. And they just said to us, "We'll do the whole thing for you. You just provide all the information and we'll upgrade the site."

The Ghostwriters site features MP3 samples of songs from your next album and you also feature all the lyrics and some of the sheet music other albums. Why this open policy?
At the time they were published, I said "Go for

it." And also it's the sort of thing as a musician in a band they would love to have. They want to know what the real chords are. "I maybe able to work it out by ear, but I really want to know what the writer wants."

Any advice for young bands out to make a name for themselves?

You can work up on a touring basis until you get to the situation where so many people know about the band and that buy your album for a start, which makes radio redundant – they hate that – so then they start playing you. You force the hand. Even more importantly are the avenues that artists take [online]. I think it can get you a lot more people than Sunday night Countdown ever did.

Do you think you'll be involved in organis- **ing an online jam session – similar to what James Morrison is doing – where you can interact with your fans and up and coming?**

The truth is it has been frustrating for artists and audiences to do it.

Where do you see the Internet taking users in the future?

We're just getting to the point where you'll have a large screen, like Jetson style, in the living room, that occupies an entire wall that you can download a pay your monthly bills such as your water bill and you'll have perfect digital quality and access. You'll click a button and anything can happen. People will continue to use the smaller screen for their homework and also get on the Net. ●

fancy letting someone else choose your **tomatoes**

Bill Bennett lets someone else squeeze his fruit, for a change.

LIKE SYNCHRONISED swimming and Korfball, online grocery shopping is very much a minority sport.

There's little doubt that online grocery shopping is small fish. A recent US survey by Cyber Dialogue (**www.cyberdialogue.com**) found that of the 53.5 million adult American Internet users, only 14.3 million had ever made any kind of online purchase. Of those, a mere 435,000 had used the Net to buy groceries.

Sales and customer numbers are rising fast. Current estimates put US sales at around US$500 million. The Yankee Group (**www.yankeegroup.com**) thinks online grocery shopping could be worth US$2 billion a year by next year. A survey by Andersen Consulting (**www.ac.com**) predicts it could be worth US$85 billion by 2007.

Yes, people are doing it

Woolworths (**www.woolworths.com.au**) corporate communications manager Russell Antcliffe says his company has around 5,000 registered Internet shoppers.

Currently Homeshop services some 200 Sydney suburbs, but the service will shortly be extended to the rest of the metropolitan area, triggering a further round of growth in customer numbers.

Greengrocer.com (**www.greengrocer.com.au**) has around 3,000 regular customers and a larger number of infrequent shoppers spread throughout the Sydney area. At the time of writing, Coles Myer (**www.coles.com .au**) was establishing its Internet business while Franklins (**www. franklins .com. au**) has yet to commit to online shopping. Given that Woolworths and Greengrocer.com are market leaders, we can assume little over 10,000 Australian's do their weekly shop on line.

While there are a number of smaller niche online food shops,

mainstream companies with a full range of grocery items are an interesting case study.

For example, Woolworths Homeshop offers some 18,000 items from dry goods to fresh meats, greengroceries, deli items and alcohol. Mr Antcliffe says this list is likely to expand. As its name suggests, Greengrocer.com started out being focused on one area of home food shopping. Its range is being extended to include other items.

Selling groceries online is relatively difficult compared with selling books or CDs — the stock ages quickly. Greengrocer.com approaches this by taking customer orders online and then, buying produce at market before packing and delivering. Until now, Woolworths literally sent someone with a trolley around a store to collect the ordered goods.

The Woolworths Homeshop business model integrates well with the supermarket business. It's strong, upmarket retail brand with an emphasis on freshness translates well to online sales. The company offers all its newspaper-advertised specials to online customers and prices are the same as in-store prices. However, there is a fixed delivery charge of $7.50, a handling charge of 10% of the total bill and a minimum order of $50. Mr Antcliffe says the handling charge is currently under review.

In effect customers purchasing the minimum order pay 25% over and above the cost of normal supermarket shopping. As online customers typically buy larger amounts than supermarket shoppers the average premium will be considerably lower.

For most people, grocery shopping is a time consuming weekly chore. Few regard it as fun. People are spending more time working than in the past. Hence there's time pressure on people to shop electronically.

Mr Antcliffe says Woolworths has identified four distinct classes of customer. The most important are people with mobility problems. Another key group are the rich yuppies and dinkies — households where both partners work. A third group are mothers with young children who find shopping too much of a chore. Finally there are the fragile seniors. Mr Antcliffe said this group often get family members to help them use computers to shop.

US experts predict that online grocery stores will expand into selling newspapers, dry cleaning, stamps and film developing. In the UK supermarkets are already selling financial services and plan to do so online. In theory, online supermarkets could sell anything from air tickets to corn flakes.

It's hard to predict exactly how online grocery shopping will develop in Australia or how it will impact physical supermarkets. There's little doubt online sales will rise.

Overseas research shows once customers convert to buying online, they quickly stop visiting supermarkets. Paradoxically they are more likely to continue shopping locally for bread, meat, fruit and vegetables even though these items are the most popular with online buyers. ●

*Bill Bennett can be contacted at **neted@netguide.aust.com***

SHOPGUIDE

Claire McFarland tries some offshore department store service.

>object of desire

Land's End

Lands' End **www.landsend.com** is a household name in the USA, and for good reason, as their selection of clothing is excellent quality without having a huge price tag. It's online store is a joy to behold with an extensive range of swimwear, mens, womens and childrens clothing and accessories, including luggage. Being a US based store, the seasons are a bit skew for the Australian market, although their range of goods is so large you'll be bound to find something which is just what you are looking for. Try the overstocks section which are available at greatly reduced prices and are more likely to be in line with the Australian seasons. Last time I looked there were some great bargains to be had on cotton jumpers because the site was focussing on summer clothes. The site gets a lot of traffic so you'll have to pick your visiting time carefully to avoid download hassles if you have a slow connection. Sign up for a mail order catalogue to be sent to your home and when you know what you are looking for go online to order.

OBJECT OF DESIRE:
the pack jacket which comes with it's own small mesh bag which it folds up and fits into. Great for carrying around if it looks like rain. $US 19.50

Your Garden

Winter is drawing to a close and it's time to think about sprucing up your home and garden. Save yourself a trip to the nursery by logging onto Your Garden Shop **shop.yourgarden.com.au** This online retailer has a great searchable database of bulbs to plant in your garden. Enter the time of year, what colour flowers you are looking for and what kind of climate you live in and the database will return a list of suitable bulbs to plant. Planting and care instructions are clear and there is a section with some great special offers. This site is the online store for Your Garden magazine, and you can access some of the informative content from the magazine via this site. This includes a monthly list of jobs to do in the garden, a selection of plants ideal for that month and tips on growing a great looking garden.

Mark Foys

Mark Foys has long been a name synonymous with style and quality, with Sydney's flagship store fondly remembered as 'the' place to shop in Sydney. Now you can visit the virtual Mark Foys store **www.mark foys.com**. This online department store features jewellery, fashion, health and beauty, collectibles and household goods. The range of goods available is good, although there is not a lot available in each category yet. The site presents items for sale in a clear, good looking interface, with fast loading pictures, which can be viewed in a larger size if interested shoppers are looking for greater detail. The customer service statement is impressive with a promise to deliver all goods within 7 working days along with a money back guarantee. MarkFoys.com has been established in conjunction with the TVSN shopping network. ●

GO SHOPPING
At shopping.ninemsn.com.au

ninemsn

TECH SUPPORT>>

This month's column looks some of the many problems Internet users face with their dialup connections.

What factors affect my Net connection performance?

The performance you observe on the Internet is a combination of the performance of every component of the network starting with your computer and running all the way through the Internet to the computer at the other end of the connection.

The Internet is a labyrinth of connections between wire centers. If any one of those wire centers gets overloaded it can have a dramatic effect on the throughput of traffic through that hub.

Performance can also be affected by the load on the computer at the remote end of the connection. Some Web sites are very popular and receive literally millions of hits each day. If the load on the remote end is too heavy the servers may delay their response due simply to their inability to keep up.

Closer to home, if you've got static or hiss on your phone line or a bad modem it may not matter how fast the Internet is running because your modem might be constantly requesting retransmission of the data.

What modem issues can affect Internet performance?

Certainly the speed of your modem has a large effect on your Internet performance. Modem speed is measured in a unit called a Baud rate, which specifies how many bits of information get transferred.

A 33.6k baud modem will transfer roughly 33,600 bits of information in a second. Modem speeds range all the way from 300 baud to 56,000 baud.

Modems today are usually at either 33.6 or 56 (commonly referred to as 56K). Most computers purchased today will come with one of these high-speed modems included as a package and preinstalled.

What is line noise?

Another cause of poor modem performance is noise on the phone line. Specifications for noise tolerance on phone lines were developed many years ago when people used phone lines for talking, not the high-speed transmission of data. The human ear has a lot better tolerance for hiss and static than a high performance modem.

Any noise on the line can cause errors in the transmission of data. Fortunately, modems are designed to compensate for these errors, but frequently the method of correcting them is to retransmit the data.

Every time you have to retransmit it slows down the total throughput on your connection, and it can actually cause your modem to adjust its transmission speed down to a lower level.

What causes line errors?

Besides the obvious things like static and hiss on the line there are other factors that contribute to errors during a data phone call. Unfortunately these other factors are usually beyond the control of the average Internet user. They have to do with things like electronics and physics.

The phone wire between your modem and your ISP's modem has certain electrical characteristics that allow it to carry signals within a certain signal range. High-speed modems push those ranges to their limits. Under such conditions errors will inevitably occur. The capacity of the line will be affected by how far it is from the telephone exchange, the type of traffic on lines laying next to it in the ground, and the quality of the connections from one cable to the next.

What tools are available to identify bottlenecks?

The PING command is included with Windows 95/98 and will tell you if a specific computer is currently accessible from your network connection.

To run the program, first connect to the Internet and then go to your MS-DOS prompt from the "Start / Programs" menu. At the prompt type the command name, "Ping", followed by a space, and then the name of the computer you want to test and press Enter. For example, to test the *NetGuide* Web site enter:

Ping www.netguide.au.com

If successful, the program will display the computer's Internet (IP) address and the number of milliseconds it took to get a response. This tells you that the computer does in fact exist on the Internet and that

you should be able to connect.

How can I check the quality of a connection?

The Traceroute command is used to track performance between two systems by checking each hub your signal passes through on its journey through the Net.

Like Ping, Traceroute is also run from the MS-DOS prompt in Windows 95/98, and you must be connected to the Net for it to work.

From the DOS prompt type "Tracert" followed by the name of the machine you want to test. Try it by tracing the route to *NetGuide*. Enter

Tracert www.netguide.au.com

The program will display the IP address and response times from each hub between your location and *NetGuide*. You can learn a lot from the Ping and Tracert commands about how information travels between servers over the Net.

What do these really tell me?

Ping tells you if the site is accessible, but if it isn't it doesn't tell you why. Tracert helps to answer that question. If ping tells you there's a problem next try Tracert to find out where the problem is.

Tracert gives you a hub by hub analysis of performance on the Internet. Hubs with slower response time are either more heavily loaded or have per-

formance characteristics that prevent them from handling high traffic levels.

Tracert will also show you if a link is down. If a hub along the route to your destination fails to respond then you know you've found the source of your problem — a failed link in the chain. If each hub answers your query but the server itself fails to respond then you know that the server is down. ●

help@hand

New?
www.netguide.au.com
www.xtra.co.nz/content/
computing/surfschool/

Lost?
www.yahoo.com.au
www.excite.com.au
www.hotbot.com
www.altavista.yellow
pages.com.aucool.infi.net
www.looksmart.com.au
www.ozsearch.com.au

Home pages
www.htmlhelp.com
www.webreference.com
www.webmonkey.com

Browsers
home.netscape.com
www.microsoft.com/ie/
www.operasoftware.com

THE NETGUIDE DIRECTORY
Web Designers and Internet Cafes Get Listed!

WEB DESIGNERS

	PHONE	WEB	EMAIL
600ml Web Development P/L	(02) 9314 3369	www.600ml.com.au	design@600ml.com.au
Active Concepts	(03) 9348 2122	www.activeconcepts.com	k.butcher@activeconcepts.com.au
Adap-2-Us	(02) 9746 1492	www.atu.com.au	sales@atu.com.au
Australian Netlink	(03) 9690 0660	www.netlink.com.au	info@netlink.com.au
Avarice Interactive	(02) 9824 2750	www.avarice.com	webmaster@avarice.com
Aveweto	(02) 9349 8263	www.aveweto.com.au	design@aveweto.com.au
Artichoke Web Design	(02) 9318 1212	www.artichokedesign.com.au	mike@artichokedesign.com.au
Aurore IT Architects	0416 150 987	www.aurore.net	design@aurore.net
Brainwiz Web Design	0419 665 709	www.brainwiz.com.au	bipl@brainwiz.com.au
Cartoon Internet	0413 930 546	www.bigfoot.com/~thecartoons	cartoons@ihug.com.au
Dark Horizon	(02) 9699 9000	www.darkhorizon.com.au	info@darkhorizon.com.au
DataTech WA Pty Ltd	(08) 9381 1488	www.datatechwa.com.au	james@datatechwa.com.au
Designer Web Pages	(03) 9462 9152	www.des-web.com.au	info@des-web.com.au
Devil Website Development	0417 062 101	www.devilweb.nu	info@devilweb.nu
EPRO Solutions Pty Ltd	(07) 3821 4238	www.epro.com.au	sales@epro.com.au
Guava Interactive	(02) 9929 0232	www.guavainteractive.com.au	info@guavainteractive.com.au
HC Web Design	(07) 3357 4557	www.hc-web.com	info@hcweb.com
Healey Communications	(02) 9834 6055	www.healey.com.au	sales@healey.com.au
Lilfish Multimedia	(02) 0954 6076	www.lilfish.com.au	lilfish@bigpond.com.au
KD Web Design	(02) 0675 3359	www.kdwebdesign.com.au	info@kdwebdesign.com.au
Laughin Lizard Design	n/a	www.accessnt.com.au/~laughinlizard	laughinlizard@accessnt.com.au
Little Black Duck Design	(02) 4942 4049	www.littleblackduck.com.au	info@littleblackduck.com.au
Lush Web Creations	(03) 9421 8999	www.lushweb.com.au	brent@lushweb.com.au
MacAdelaide	(08) 8394 2458	www.members.tripod.com/macadelaide	macadelaide@hotmail.com
Massive Interactive	(02) 9331 8400	www.massive.com.au	info@massive.com.au
Netplus Internet marketing	(07) 5530 8883	www.netplus.net.au	mail@netplus.net.au
Netspring Design	(02) 4751 8050	www.netspring.com.au	pcarter@netspring.com.au
Netwide Solutions Pty Ltd	(03) 9897 1121	www.netwide.com.au	info@netwide.com.au
Philip Greentree & Assoc.	(02) 4047 1202	www.greentree.com.au	philip@greentree.com.au
Quoin Technology	(02) 9299 4737	www.quoin.com.au	info@quoin.com.au
Redback	(02) 0874 8331	www.redback.com.au	sales@redback.com.au
Streetwise Interactive Design	(08) 0493 1097	www.swid.com.au	jason@swid.com.au
The Wiliam Group	(02) 0518 5777	www.wiliam.com.au	solutions@wiliam.com.au
Webcity	(02) 9212 6003	www.webcity.com.au	info@webcity.com.au
Webdesigner	(07) 3891 5873	www.webdesigner.com.au	igardner@tog.com.au
WebDezign	n/a	wwwwebdesign.gb.net	Trekhead@ozemail.com.au
WebTribe Web Design	0411 597 007	www.webtribe.com.au	webtribe@gubbs.net,au
Web & PC Services	(02) 9972 1300	www.webpc.com.au	info@webpc.com.au
With Imagination	(02) 9929 9229	info@wi.com.au	www.wi.com.au

INTERNET CAFES

	PHONE	WEB	EMAIL	COSTS
Cybernet Cafe (Melb) 789 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn	(03) 9818 1288	www.cyber.aus.net	cybercafe@internet/cafe.org	$6/0.5hr, $12/hr
Cartoon Internet (Melb) Tivoli Arcade, 233-251 Bourke St.	0413 930 546	www.bigfoot.com/~thecartoons	cartoons@ihug.com	$8/hr
Digi-kaf (Syd) 174 St. John's Road, Glebe	(02) 9660 3509	www.digikaf.com.au	info@digikaf.com.au	$10/hr, $8/hr
Internet Cafe (Syd) 236 Clarence St.	(02) 9261 5666	www.cafesydney.net	ic@cafesydney.net	$10/hr
The Digital Cafe (Syd) 197 Military Rd., Neutral Bay	(02) 9904 9999	www.thedigitalcafe.com.au	email@thedigitalcafe.com.au	$10/hr (15 min)
The Sugar Shack (Qld) 9 Nerang St. Southport	(07) 5532 4495	www.sugarshack.com.au	sugar@fan.net.au	$10/hr
Travellers Contact Pt. (Syd) 7th Floor 428 George St.	(02) 9221 8744	www.travellers.com.au	sydney@travellers.com.au	$5/0.5hr, $8/hr
Surfnet Cafe (Syd) 5a Market Lane, Manly	(02) 9976 0808	www.surfnet.net.au	info@surfnet.net.au	$8/hr
Well Connected (Syd) 35 Glebe Pt. Rd., Glebe	(02) 9566 2655	www.wellconnected.com.au	jack@wellconnected.com.au	$6/hr (members) $10/hr (guest)

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be so popular and will probably be forced back to the relative safety of your personal computer.

Voice recognition technology could make applications such as email via TV and Web browsing more practical. But that too may take some time.

Web sites may well be designed for television audiences (big text might help for a start), but Berman says this option will be too expensive for most people.

And besides all these physical barriers will people actually want to surf the TV? One might expect a high percentage of people who watch TV do it in order to vege out or wind down — to have all the information presented to you without much cause for concern. If we don't like the show, we change the channel. This avenue has been enhanced by the options given to those who subscribe to pay TV.

The popularity of the Internet is not in question here. In fact recent figures from www.consult show that people are spending less time watching TV and less time sleeping, while more hours are being committed online.

The online television experience will have to be simplified for consumers. Ideally it shouldn't be any harder to operate than your current video re-

mote. Most probably digital TV will use datacasting — broadcast with Internet information — to serve up the most popular information on the Net. It won't be as flexible or interactive as browsing on a computer. In Europe, where digital services have started, weather and news data are popular and presented in a style with some similarities to the way Teletext was.

Viewing television is a passive experience... Your body language itself is not conducive to active thoughts or sifting through reams of text.

The recently floated satellite pay TV provider Austar (**www.austar.com.au**) looks to be the first to begin datacasting, offering a number of services such as banking and weather. TV networks, Internet companies, telecoms and all who manage to get a licence to broadcast digital television, will have to watch their audience closely. The revenge of the couch potatoes could be a less than eager interactive audience. ●

Revenge of the couch potatoes

THE RACE TO ESTABLISH digital television services in Australia is beginning to hot up as we reach the end of the millennium. Due by 2001, digital television or 'datacasting' has been heralded as the jewel in the convergence crown — it will mean the Internet can be merged with television and allow for a myriad e-commerce services — accessible through broadcast advertisements. Millions more people will have access to the Net, at least when the initial price of digital televisions comes down to a reasonable figure.

No doubt the effect it will have on the consumer experience will be enormous, but perhaps not in the way commonly thought. We'll be able to get services on TV — banking and retail for instance — through the Internet, the medium through which the greatest library of information. But it will not be the Web on TV as we know it. We won't be Web browsing as we currently do on our computers.

WebTV, the Microsoft owned concept that has acted as a precursor to digital television, has not kicked off officially in this country but has been in the US for quite some time. It uses a set-top box and dial-up modem to enable you to browse the Web on your TV. Mitch Berman, marketing manager for US based interactive TV software provider OpenTV (**www.opentv.com**) , says WebTV has not been a success and for one key reason — people don't want to use the TV as they do their computer. "Let me paint you a picture. Your average bloke in Newcastle is sitting back on his couch watching the footy on a Friday night with a beer in hand after a hard week at work. Do you think he wants to surf the Web on TV? Unlikely."

Point taken. Viewing television is a passive experience. You slouch comfortably on your sofa or even lie down on the ground with a pillow and blanket if the right program comes along. Your body language itself is not conducive to active thoughts or sifting through reams of text as you do when you're hunting through the Web.

Current analogue television screens do not present a very clear picture of Web sites. In fact, they look awful. My old 15-inch monitor is a crystal ball in comparison. The mouse allows Web browsing on a personal computer to be interactive. The keyboard helps too. However, the current infra remote keyboards do not let you move the cursor as swiftly as you would with your trusty mouse. The most effective move on the current models of interactive TV I've seen thus far has been the scroll down.

There will be improvement in this area until we can easily select elements on a TV screen but this may take some time. It's also unlikely you will write long emails or create word documents in front of your TV. Considering you're sitting at least five feet away from the screen, you're not going to want to squint at small text on screen this far away. It would be uncomfortable and impractical. Besides, everyone else in the room would be missing the show anyway. So you won't

My wife is obsessed with this new car. In the old days I could have baffled her with a bit of techno-babble and sold her off the idea completely. But she's been talking to someone. I don't know who, but she's seriously clued-up. I think I'm in trouble. Big trouble. Brian 3.16pm Queenstown.